



*Vladimir Lenin*

Alliance  
of the Working Class  
and the Peasantry

*Workers of All Countries, Unite!*

Lenin

Alliance  
of the Working Class  
and the Peasantry

**REMAINDER**

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#### PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This collection includes articles and speeches by V. I. Lenin dealing with the policy of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union toward the peasantry at various stages of the revolutionary struggle waged by the working class of Russia, the struggle for democracy and socialism.

All the material is arranged in chronological order. The translations have been taken from the English edition of V. I. Lenin's *Collected Works* in 45 volumes prepared by Progress Publishers, Moscow.

В. И. ЛЕНИН

#### О СОЮЗЕ РАБОЧЕГО КЛАССА И КРЕСТЬЯНСТВА

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## The Workers' Party and the Peasantry<sup>1</sup>

Forty years have passed since the peasants were emancipated. It is quite natural that the public should celebrate with particular enthusiasm February 19,<sup>2</sup> the anniversary of the fall of old feudal Russia and the beginning of an epoch which promised the people liberty and prosperity. But we must not forget that besides genuine loathing of serfdom and all its manifestations, there is also much unctuousness in the laudatory orations delivered on the occasion. The now fashionable estimation of the "great" Reform as "the emancipation of the peasantry accompanied by a grant of land *with the aid* of state compensation" is utterly hypocritical and false. Actually, the peasants were emancipated *from* the land, inasmuch as the plots they had tilled for centuries were ruthlessly cut down<sup>3</sup> and hundreds of thousands of peasants were deprived of all their land and settled on a quarter or beggar's allotment.<sup>4</sup> In point of fact, the peasants were doubly robbed: not only were their plots of land cut down, but they had to pay "redemption money" for the land left to them, and which had always been in their possession; the redemption price, moreover, was far above the actual value of the land. Ten years after the emancipation of the peasantry the landowners themselves admitted to government officials investigating the state of agriculture that the peasants had been made to pay not only for their land, but for their personal liberty. Yet, although

the peasants had to pay redemption money for their liberation, they were not granted real freedom; for twenty years they remained "temporarily bound"<sup>5</sup>, they were left—and have remained to this day—the lowest social-estate, subject to flogging; liable to special taxes; bereft of the right freely to leave of the semi-feudal commune, freely to dispose of their own land, or freely to settle in any part of the country. Our peasant Reform, far from manifesting magnanimity of the government, on the contrary, serves as a great historical example of the extent to which the autocratic government betrays everything it touches. Under pressure of military defeat, appalling financial difficulties, and menacing discontent among the peasantry, the government was actually *compelled* to liberate the peasants. The tsar himself admitted that the peasants had to be emancipated from above, lest they emancipate themselves from below. But in embarking on emancipation, the government did everything possible and impossible to satisfy the greed of the "injured" serf-owners; it did not even stop at the base device of reshuffling the men who were to carry out the Reform, although the men selected had come from among the nobility itself! The first body of mediators<sup>6</sup> was dissolved and replaced by men incapable of refusing to help the serf-owners cheat the peasantry in the very process of demarcating the land. Nor could the great Reform be carried out without resort to military punitive action and the shooting-down of peasants who refused to accept the title-deeds to the land.<sup>7</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the best men of the time, muzzled by the censors, met this great Reform with the silence of condemnation.

The peasant, "emancipated" from *corvée* service, emerged from the hands of the reformers crushed, plundered, degraded, tied to his allotment, so much so that he had no alternative but "voluntarily" to accept *corvée* services. And so he began to cultivate the land of his for-

mer master, "renting" from him the very land that had been cut off from his own allotment, hiring himself out in the winter for summer work in return for the corn he had to borrow from the landowner to feed his hungry family. The "free labour", for which the manifesto drawn up by a jesuitical priest<sup>8</sup> called upon the peasantry to ask the "blessing of God", turned out to be nothing more nor less than labour-service and bondage.

To oppression by the landowners, which was preserved thanks to the magnanimity of the officials who introduced and carried out the Reform, was added oppression by capital. The power of money, which crushed even the French peasant, emancipated from the power of the feudal landowners, not by a miserable, half-hearted reform, but by a mighty popular revolution—this power of money bore down with all its weight upon our semi-serf muzhik. He had to obtain money at all costs—in order to pay the taxes which had increased as a result of the beneficent Reform, to rent land, to buy the few miserable articles of factory-made goods which began to squeeze out the home manufactures of the peasant, to buy corn, etc. The power of money not only crushed the peasantry, but split it up. An enormous number of peasants were steadily ruined and turned into proletarians; from the minority arose a small group of grasping kulaks and enterprising muzhiks who laid hands upon the peasant farms and the peasants' lands, and who formed the kernel of the rising rural bourgeoisie. The forty years since the Reform have been marked by this constant process of "de-peasantising" the peasants, a process of slow and painful extinction. The peasant was reduced to beggary. He lived together with his cattle, was clothed in rags, and fared on weeds; he fled from his allotment, if he had anywhere to go, and even *paid* to be relieved of it, if he could induce anyone to take over a plot of land, the payments on which exceeded the income it yielded. The peasants were in a state of chronic starvation, and they died by the

tens of thousands from famine and epidemics in bad harvest years, which recurred with increasing frequency.

This is the state of our countryside even at the present time. One might ask: What is the way out, by what means can the lot of the peasantry be improved? The small peasantry can free itself from the yoke of capital only by associating itself with the working-class movement, by helping the workers in their struggle for the socialist system, for transforming the land, as well as the other means of production (factories, works, machines, etc.), into social property. Trying to save the peasantry by protecting small-scale farming and small holdings from the onslaught of capitalism would be a useless retarding of social development; it would mean deceiving the peasantry with illusions of the possibility of prosperity even under capitalism, it would mean disuniting the labouring classes and creating a privileged position for the minority at the expense of the majority. That is why Social-Democrats will always struggle against senseless and vicious institutions such as that which forbids the peasant to dispose of his land, such as collective liability,<sup>9</sup> or the system of prohibiting the peasants from freely leaving the village commune or freely accepting into it persons belonging to any social-estate. But, as we have seen, our peasants are suffering not only and not so much from oppression by capital as from oppression by the landowners and the survivals of serfdom. Ruthless struggle against these shackles, which immeasurably worsen the condition of the peasantry and tie it hand and foot, is not only possible but even necessary in the interest of the country's social development in general; for the hopeless poverty, ignorance, lack of rights, and degradation, from which the peasants suffer, lay an imprint of Asiatic backwardness upon the entire social system of our country. Social-Democracy would not be doing its duty if it did not render every assistance to this struggle. This assistance

should take the form, briefly put, of *carrying the class struggle into the countryside*.

We have seen that in the modern Russian village two kinds of class antagonism exist side by side: first, the antagonism between the agricultural workers and the proprietors, and, secondly, the antagonism between the peasantry as a whole and the landowner class as a whole. The first antagonism is developing and becoming more acute; the second is gradually diminishing. The first is still wholly in the future; the second to a considerable degree already belongs to the past. And yet, despite this, it is the second antagonism that has the most vital and most practical significance for Russian Social-Democrats at the present time. It goes without saying, it is an axiom for every Social-Democrat, that we must utilise all the opportunities presenting themselves to us to develop the class-consciousness of the agricultural wage-workers, that we must pay attention to the migration of urban workers to the countryside (e.g., mechanics employed on steam threshing-machines, etc.) and to the markets where agricultural labourers are hired.

But our rural labourers are still too closely connected with the peasantry, they are still too heavily burdened with the misfortunes of the peasantry as a whole to enable the movement of the rural workers to assume national significance, either now or in the immediate future. On the other hand, the question of sweeping away the survivals of serfdom, of driving the spirit of social-estate inequality and degradation of tens of millions of the "common people" out of the whole of the Russian state system is already a matter of national significance, and the party which claims to be the vanguard in the fight for freedom cannot ignore it.

The deplorable condition of the peasantry has now become (in a more or less general form) almost universally recognised. The phrase about "the defects" of the Reform of 1861 and the need for state aid has become a

current truism. It is our duty to point out that peasant distress arises precisely from the class oppression of the peasantry; that the government is the loyal champion of the oppressing classes; and that those who sincerely and seriously desire a radical improvement in the condition of the peasantry must seek, not aid from the government, but deliverance from its oppression and the achievement of political liberty. There is talk of the redemption payments being excessively high, and of benevolent measures on the part of the government to reduce them and extend the dates of payment. Our reply to this is: all payment of redemption money is nothing more nor less than robbery of the peasantry by the landowners and the government, screened by legal forms and bureaucratic phrases; it is nothing more nor less than tribute paid to the serf-owners for emancipating their slaves. We will put forward the demand for the immediate and complete abolition of redemption payments and quit-rents,<sup>10</sup> and the demand for the return to the people of the hundreds of millions which the tsarist government has extorted from them in the course of the years to satisfy the greed of the slave-owners. There is talk of the peasants not having sufficient land, of the need for state aid to provide them with more land. Our reply to this is: it is precisely *because of* state aid (aid to the landowners, of course) that the peasants in such an enormous number of cases were deprived of land they vitally needed. We will put forward the demand for restitution to the peasants of the land of which they have been deprived, a condition that still binds them to forced labour, to the rendering of corvée service, i.e., that virtually keeps them in a state of serfdom. We will put forward the demand for the establishment of peasant committees to remove the crying injustices perpetrated against the emancipated slaves by the Committees of the Nobles set up by the tsarist government. We will demand the establishment of courts empowered to reduce the excessively high payment for land extorted from the peas-

ants by the landowners who take advantage of their hopeless position, courts in which the peasants could prosecute for usury all who take advantage of their extreme need to impose shackling agreements upon them. We will utilise every opportunity to explain to the peasants that the people who talk to them about the tutelage or aid of the present state are either fools or charlatans, and are their worst enemies; that what the peasants stand most in need of is relief from the monstrous oppression of the bureaucratic power, recognition of their complete and absolute equality in all respects with all other social-estates, complete freedom of movement from place to place, freedom to dispose of their lands, and freedom to manage their own communal affairs and dispose of the communal revenues. The most common facts in the life of any Russian village provide a thousand issues for agitation in behalf of the above demands. This agitation must be based upon the local, concrete, and most pressing needs of the peasantry; yet it must not be confined to these needs, but must be steadily directed towards widening the outlook of the peasants, towards developing their political consciousness. The peasants must be brought to understand the special positions occupied in the state by the landowners and the peasants respectively, and they must be taught that the only way to free the countryside from tyrannical oppression is to convene an assembly of representatives of the people and to overthrow the arbitrary rule of the officials. It is absurd to assert that the demand for political liberty would not be understood by the workers: not only the workers who have engaged the factory owners and the police in direct battle for years and who constantly see their best fighters subjected to arbitrary arrests and persecution—not only these workers, who are already imbued with socialism, but every sensible peasant who thinks at all about the things he sees going on around him will understand what the workers are fighting for, will understand the significance of a



Zemsky Sobor which will emancipate the whole country from the unlimited power of the hated officials. Agitation on the basis of the direct and most urgent needs of the peasants will fulfil its purpose—i.e., carry the class struggle into the countryside—only when it succeeds in combining every exposure of some “economic” evil with definite political demands.

But the question arises whether the Social-Democratic Labour Party can include in its programme demands like those referred to above. Can it undertake to carry on agitation among the peasantry? Will it not lead to the scattering and diversion of our revolutionary forces, not very numerous as it is, from the principal and only reliable channel of the movement?

Such objections are based on a misunderstanding. We must definitely include in our programme demands for the emancipation of our countryside from all the survivals of slavery, demands capable of rousing the best section of the peasantry, if not to engage in independent political action, then at all events consciously to support the working-class struggle for emancipation. We should be making a mistake if we defended measures that would have the effect of retarding social development or of artificially shielding the small peasantry against the growth of capitalism, against the development of large-scale production; but we should be committing a much more disastrous mistake if we failed to utilise the working-class movement for the purpose of spreading among the peasantry the democratic demands of which the Reform of February 19, 1861, fell short because of its distortion by the landowners and the officials. Our Party must include such demands in its programme if it is to take the lead of the whole people in the struggle against the autocracy.\* But the inclusion

\* We have drafted a Social-Democratic programme which includes the above-mentioned demands. We hope—after this draft has been discussed and amended with the participation of the

of these points does not mean that we would call active revolutionary forces from the towns to the villages. Such a thing is out of the question. There can be no doubt that all the militant elements of the Party must concentrate on work in the towns and industrial centres; that only the industrial proletariat is capable of conducting a steadfast and mass struggle against the autocracy, of employing such methods of struggle as organising public demonstrations, or of issuing a *popular* political newspaper regularly and circulating it widely. We must include peasant demands in our programme, not in order to call convinced Social-Democrats from the towns to the countryside, not in order to chain them to the village, but to guide the activities of those forces that *cannot* find an outlet anywhere except in the rural localities and to utilise for the cause of democracy, for the political struggle for freedom, the ties which, owing to the force of circumstances, a good many faithful Social-Democratic intellectuals and workers have with the countryside—ties that are necessarily increasing and growing stronger with the growth of the movement. We have long passed the stage when we were a small detachment of volunteers, when the reserves of Social-Democratic forces were limited to circles of young people who all “went to the workers”. Our movement now has a whole army at its command, an army of workers, engaged in the struggle for socialism and freedom—an army of intellectuals who have been taking part in the movement and who can now be found over the whole length and breadth of Russia—an army of sympathisers whose eyes are turned with faith and hope towards the working-class movement and who are prepared to render it a thousand services. We are confronted with the great task of organising all these armies in such a manner as will enable us, not only to organise transient

Emancipation of Labour group<sup>41</sup>—to publish it as the draft programme of our Party in one of our forthcoming issues.

outbreaks, not only to strike casual and sporadic (and therefore not dangerous) blows at the enemy, but to pursue the enemy steadily and persistently, in a determined struggle all along the line, to harass the autocratic government wherever it sows oppression and gathers a harvest of hatred. Can this aim be achieved without sowing the seeds of the class struggle and political consciousness among the many millions of the peasantry? Let no one say it is impossible to sow these seeds! It is not only possible, it is already being done in a thousand ways that escape our attention and influence. This process will evolve much more widely and rapidly when we issue a slogan that will bring our influence to bear and when we unfurl the banner of the emancipation of the Russian peasantry from all the survivals of shameful serfdom. Country people coming to the towns even today regard with curiosity and interest the workers' struggle, incomprehensible to them, and carry news of it to the remotest parts of the land. We can and must bring about a situation in which the curiosity of the bystanders is replaced, if not by full understanding, then at least by a vague consciousness that the workers are struggling for the interests of the whole people, by a growing sympathy for their struggle. And when that has been done, the day of the victory of the revolutionary workers' party over the police government will come with a rapidity exceeding our own anticipation.

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## To the Rural Poor

An Explanation for the Peasants  
of What the Social-Democrats Want

### 1. The Struggle of the Urban Workers

Many peasants have probably already heard about the labour unrest in the towns. Some of them have themselves been in the capitals<sup>12</sup> and in the factories, and have seen the riots, as the police call them. Others know workers who were involved in the unrest and were deported to their villages by the authorities. Others again must have seen the leaflets issued by the workers, or pamphlets about the workers' struggle. Still others have only heard stories about what is going on in the towns from people with firsthand experience.

Formerly, only students rebelled, but now thousands and tens of thousands of workers have risen in all the big towns. In most cases they fight against their employers, against the factory owners, against the capitalists. The workers declare strikes, all of them stop work at a factory at the same time and demand higher wages, demand that they should be made to work not eleven or ten hours a day, but only eight hours. The workers also demand other things that would make the working man's life easier. They want the workshops to be in better condition and the machines to be protected by special devices so as to prevent them from maiming the workers; they want their children to be able to go to school and the sick to be given proper aid in the hospitals; they want the workers' homes to be like human dwellings instead of being like pigsties.

The police intervene in the workers' struggle. The police seize workers, throw them into prison, deport them without trial to their villages, or even to Siberia. The government has passed laws banning strikes and workers' meetings. But the workers wage their fight against the police and against the government. The workers say: We, millions of working people, have bent our backs long enough! We have worked for the rich and remained paupers long enough! We have allowed them to rob us long enough! We want to unite in unions, to unite all the workers in one big workers' union (a workers' *party*) and to strive jointly for a better life. We want to achieve a new and better order of society: in this new and better society there must be neither rich nor poor; all will have to work. Not a handful of rich people, but all the working people must enjoy the fruits of their common labour. Machines and other improvements must serve to ease the work of all and not to enable a few to grow rich at the expense of millions and tens of millions of people. This new and better society is called *socialist society*. The teachings about this society are called *socialism*. The workers' unions which fight for this better order of society are called *Social-Democratic parties*. Such parties exist openly in nearly all countries (except Russia and Turkey), and our workers, together with socialists from among the educated people, have also formed such a party: the *Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party*.

The government persecutes that party, but it exists in secret, despite all prohibitions; it publishes its newspapers and pamphlets and organises secret unions. The workers not only meet in secret but come out into the streets in crowds and unfurl their banners bearing the inscriptions: "Long live the eight-hour day! Long live freedom! Long live socialism!" The government savagely persecutes the workers for this. It even sends troops to shoot down the workers. Russian soldiers have killed Russian workers in

Yaroslavl, St. Petersburg, Riga, Rostov-on-Don, and Zlatoust.

But the workers do not yield. They continue the fight. They say: neither persecution, prison, deportation, penal servitude, nor death can frighten us. Our cause is a just one. We are fighting for the freedom and the happiness of all who work. We are fighting to free tens and hundreds of millions of people from abuse of power, oppression and poverty. The workers are becoming more and more class-conscious. The number of Social-Democrats is growing fast in all countries. We shall win despite all persecution.

The rural poor must clearly understand who these Social-Democrats are, what they want, and what must be done in the countryside to help the Social-Democrats to win happiness for the people.

## 2. What Do the Social-Democrats Want?

The Russian Social-Democrats are first and foremost striving to win *political liberty*. They need political liberty in order to unite all the Russian workers extensively and openly in the struggle for a new and better socialist order of society.

What is political liberty?

To understand this the peasant should first compare his present state of freedom with serfdom. Under the serf-owning system the peasant could not marry without the landlord's permission. Today the peasant is free to marry without anyone's permission. Under the serf-owning system the peasant had unfailingly to work for his landlord on days fixed by the latter's bailiff. Today the peasant is free to decide which employer to work for, on which days, and for what pay. Under the serf-owning system the peasant could not leave his village without the landlord's permission. Today the peasant is free to go wherever he pleases—if the *mir* allows him to go, if he is not in arrears

with his taxes, if he can get a passport, and if the governor or the police chief does not forbid his changing residence. Thus, even today the peasant is not quite free to go where he pleases; he does not enjoy complete freedom of movement; the peasant is still a semi-serf. Later on we shall explain in detail why the Russian peasant is still a semi-serf and what he must do to escape from this condition.

Under the serf-owning system the peasant had no right to acquire property without the landlord's permission; he could not buy land. Today the peasant is free to acquire any kind of property (but even today he is not quite free to leave the *mir*; he is not quite free to dispose of his land as he pleases). Under the serf-owning system the peasant could be flogged by order of the landlord. Today the peasant cannot be flogged by order of the landlord, although he is still liable to corporal punishment.

This freedom is called *civil* liberty—freedom in family matters, in private matters, in matters concerning property. The peasant and the worker are free (although not quite) to arrange their family life and their private affairs, to dispose of their labour (choose their employer) and their property.

But neither the Russian workers nor the Russian people as a whole are yet free to arrange their *public* affairs. The people as a whole are the serfs of the government officials, just as the peasants were the serfs of the landlords. The Russian people have no right to choose their officials, no right to elect representatives to legislate for the whole country. The Russian people have not even the right to arrange meetings for the discussion of *state* affairs. We dare not even print newspapers or books, and dare not even speak to all and for all on matters concerning the whole state without permission from officials who have been put in authority over us without our consent, just as the landlord used to appoint his bailiff without the consent of the peasants!

Just as the peasants were the slaves of the landlords, so the Russian people are still the slaves of the officials. Just as the peasants lacked civil freedom under the serf-owning system, so the Russian people still lack *political* liberty. Political liberty means the freedom of the people to arrange their public, state affairs. Political liberty means the right of the people to elect their representatives (deputies) to a State Duma (parliament). All laws should be discussed and passed, all taxes should be fixed only by such a State Duma (parliament) elected by the people themselves. Political liberty means the right of the people themselves to choose all their officials, arrange all kinds of meetings for the discussion of all state affairs, and publish whatever papers and books they please, without having to ask for permission.

All the other European peoples won political liberty for themselves long ago. Only in Turkey and in Russia are the people still politically enslaved by the sultan's government and by the tsarist autocratic government. Tsarist autocracy means the unlimited power of the tsar. The people have no voice in determining the structure of the state or in running it. All laws are made and all officials are appointed by the tsar alone, by his personal, unlimited, autocratic authority. But, of course, the tsar *cannot even know* all Russian laws and all Russian officials. The tsar cannot even know all that goes on in the country. The tsar simply endorses the will of a few score of the richest and most high-born officials. However much he may desire to, one man cannot govern a vast country like Russia. It is not the tsar who governs Russia—it is only a manner of speech to talk about autocratic, one-man rule! Russia is governed by a handful of the richest and most highborn officials. The tsar learns only what this handful are pleased to tell him. The tsar cannot in any way go against the will of this handful of high-ranking nobles: the tsar himself is a landlord and a member of the nobility; since his earliest childhood he has lived only

among these high-born people; it was they who brought him up and educated him; he knows about the Russian people as a whole only that which is known to these noble gentry, these rich landlords, and the few very rich merchants who are received at the tsar's court.

In every volost administration office you will find the same picture hanging on the wall; it depicts the tsar (Alexander III, the father of the present tsar) speaking to the volost headmen who have come to his coronation. "*Obey your Marshals of the Nobility!*"<sup>13</sup> the tsar is ordering them. And the present tsar, Nicholas II, has repeated those words. Thus, the tsars themselves admit that they can govern the country only with the aid of the nobility and through the nobility. We must well remember those words of the tsar's about the peasants having to obey the nobility. We must clearly understand what a lie is being told the people by those who try to make out that tsarist government is the best form of government. In other countries—those people say—the government is elected; but it is the rich who are elected, and they govern unjustly and oppress the poor. In Russia the government is not elected; an autocratic tsar governs the whole country. The tsar stands above everyone, rich and poor. The tsar, they tell us, is just to everyone, to the poor and to the rich alike.

Such talk is sheer hypocrisy. Every Russian knows the kind of justice that is dispensed by our government. Everybody knows whether a plain worker or a farm labourer in our country can become a member of the State Council. In all other European countries, however, factory workers and farm-hands have been elected to the State Duma (parliament); they have been able to speak freely to all the people about the miserable condition of the workers, and call up the workers to unite and fight for a better life. And no one has dared to stop these speeches of the people's representatives; no policeman has dared to lay a finger on them.

In Russia there is no elective government, and she is governed not merely by the rich and the high-born, but by the worst of these. She is governed by the most skilful intriguers at the tsar's court, by the most artful tricksters, by those who carry lies and slanders to the tsar, and flatter and toady to him. They govern in secret; the people do not and cannot know what new laws are being drafted, what wars are being hatched, what new taxes are being introduced, which officials are being rewarded and for what services, and which are being dismissed. In no country is there such a multitude of officials as in Russia. These officials tower above the voiceless people like a dark forest—a mere worker can never make his way through this forest, can never obtain justice. Not a single complaint against bribery, robbery or abuse of power on the part of the officials is ever brought to light; every complaint is smothered in official red tape. The voice of the individual never reaches the whole people, but is lost in this dark jungle, stifled in the police torture chamber. An army of officials, who were never elected by the people and who are not responsible to the people, has woven a thick web, and men and women are struggling in this web like flies.

Tsarist autocracy is an autocracy of officials. Tsarist autocracy means the feudal dependence of the people upon the officials and especially upon the police. Tsarist autocracy is police autocracy.

That is why the workers come out into the streets with banners bearing the inscriptions: "Down with the autocracy!", "Long live political liberty!" That is why the tens of millions of the rural poor must also support and take up this battle-cry of the urban workers. Like them, undaunted by persecution, fearless of the enemy's threats and violence, and undeterred by the first reverses, the agricultural labourers and the poor peasants must come forward for a decisive struggle for the freedom of the whole of the Russian people and demand first of all the

*convocation of the representatives of the people.* Let the people themselves all over Russia elect their representatives (deputies). Let those representatives form a supreme assembly, which will introduce elective government in Russia, free the people from feudal dependence upon the officials and the police, and secure for the people the right to meet freely, speak freely, and have a free press!

That is what the Social-Democrats want first and foremost. That is the meaning of their first demand: the *demand for political liberty.*

We know that political liberty, free elections to the State Duma (parliament), freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, will not at once deliver the working people from poverty and oppression. There is no means of immediately delivering the poor of town and country from the burden of working for the rich. The working people have no one to place their hopes in and no one to rely upon *but themselves.* Nobody will free the working man from poverty *if he does not free himself.* And to free themselves the workers of the whole country, the whole of Russia, must unite in one union, in one party. But millions of workers cannot unite if the autocratic police government bans all meetings, all workers' newspapers, and the election of workers' deputies. To unite they must have the right to form unions of every kind, must have freedom to unite; they must enjoy political liberty.

Political liberty will not at once deliver the working people from poverty, *but it will give the workers a weapon with which to fight poverty.* There is no other means and there can be no other means of fighting poverty except the *unity of the workers themselves.* But millions of people cannot unite unless there is *political liberty.*

In all European countries where the people have won political liberty, the workers began to unite long ago. Throughout the whole of Europe, workers who own no land and no workshops, and work for other people for wages all their lives are called *proletarians.* Over fifty

years ago the call was sounded for the working people to unite. "Workers of all countries, unite!"—during the past fifty years these words have circled the whole globe, are repeated at tens and hundreds of thousands of workers' meetings, and can be read in millions of Social-Democratic pamphlets and newspapers in every language.

Of course, to unite millions of workers in one union, in one party, is an extremely difficult task; it requires time, persistence, perseverance, and courage. The workers are ground down by poverty and want, benumbed by ceaseless toil for the capitalists and landlords; often they have not even the time to think of why they remain perpetual paupers, or how to be delivered from this. Everything is done to prevent the workers from uniting: either by means of direct and brutal violence, as in countries like Russia where there is no political liberty, or by refusing to employ workers who preach the doctrines of socialism, or, lastly, by means of deceit and bribery. But no violence or persecution can stop the proletarian workers from fighting for the great cause of the emancipation of all working people from poverty and oppression. The number of Social-Democratic workers is constantly growing. Take our neighbouring country, Germany; there they have elective government. Formerly, in Germany, too, there was an unlimited, autocratic, monarchist government. But long ago, over fifty years ago, the German people destroyed the autocracy and won political liberty by force. In Germany laws are not made by a handful of officials, as in Russia, but by an *assembly of people's representatives*, by a parliament, by the *Reichstag*, as the Germans call it. All adult males take part in electing deputies to this assembly. This makes it possible to count how many votes were cast for the Social-Democrats. In 1887 *one-tenth* of all votes were cast for the Social-Democrats. In 1898 (when the most recent elections to the Reichstag took place) the Social-Democratic vote *increased nearly threefold.* This time *more than one-fourth* of all

the votes were cast for the Social-Democrats. *Over two million* adult males voted for *Social-Democratic candidates* to parliament. Among the farm labourers of Germany socialism is not yet widespread but it is now making very rapid progress among them. And when the masses of farm-hands, day labourers and poor, pauperised peasants unite with their brothers in the towns, the German workers will win and establish an order under which the working people will suffer neither poverty nor oppression.

By what means do the Social-Democratic workers want to deliver the people from poverty?

To know this, one must clearly understand the cause of the poverty of the vast masses of the people under the present social order. Rich cities are growing, magnificent shops and houses are being built, railways are being constructed, all kinds of machines and improvements are being introduced in industry and agriculture, but millions of people remain in poverty, and continue to work all their lives to provide a bare subsistence for their families. That is not all: more and more people are becoming unemployed. Both in town and country there are more and more people who can find no work at all. In the villages they starve, while in the towns they swell the ranks of the "tramps" and "down-and-outs", find refuge like bcasts in dug-outs on the outskirts of towns, or in dreadful slums and cellars, such as those in the Khitrov Market in Moscow.

Why is this? Wealth and luxury are increasing, and yet the millions and millions who by their labour create all this wealth remain in poverty and want! Peasants are dying of starvation, workers wander about without employment, and yet merchants export millions of poods of grain from Russia to foreign countries, factories are standing idle because the goods cannot be sold, for there is no market for them!

The cause of all this is, first of all, that most of the land, and also the factories, workshops, machines, build-

ings, ships, etc., belong to a small number of rich people. Tens of millions of people work on this land and at these factories and workshops, but they are all owned by a few thousand or tens of thousands of rich people, landlords, merchants, and factory owners. The people work for those rich men for hire, for wages, for a crust of bread. All that is produced over and above what is required to provide a bare subsistence for the workers goes to the rich; this is their profit, their "income". All the benefits arising from the use of machines and from improvements in methods of production go to the landowners and capitalists; they accumulate wealth untold, while the workers get only a miserable pittance. The workers are brought together for work; on large estates and at big factories several hundred and sometimes even several thousand workers are employed. When labour is united in this way, and when the most diverse kinds of machines are employed, work becomes more productive: one worker produces much more than scores of workers did working separately and without the aid of machines. But the benefits of this more productive labour go not to all the working people, but to an insignificant number of big landowners, merchants, and factory owners.

One often hears it said that the landlords and merchants "*provide work*" for the people, that they "*provide*" the poor with earnings. It is said, for instance, that a neighbouring factory or a neighbouring landlord "*maintains*" the local peasants. Actually, however, the workers by their labour *maintain* themselves and also all those who do not work themselves. *But for permission* to work on the landlord's land, at a factory, or on a railway, the worker *gives* the owner *gratis* all he produces, while the worker himself gets only enough for a bare subsistence. Actually, therefore, it is not the landlords and the merchants who give the workers employment, but the workers who by their labour maintain everybody, surrendering *gratis* the greater part of their labour.



Further. In all present-day states the people's poverty is due to the fact that the workers produce all sorts of articles for sale, for the market. The factory owner and the artisan, the landlord and the well-to-do peasant produce various goods, raise cattle, sow and harvest grain *for sale*, in order to obtain *money*. Money has everywhere become the ruling power. All the goods produced by human labour are exchanged for money. With money you can buy anything. With money you can even buy a man, that is to say, force a man who owns nothing to work for another who has money. Formerly, land used to be the ruling power—that was the case under the serf-owning system: whoever possessed land possessed power and authority. Today, however, money, capital, has become the ruling power. With money you can buy as much land as you like. Without money you will not be able to do much even if you have land: you must have money to buy a plough or other implements, to buy livestock, to buy clothes and other town-made goods, not to speak of paying taxes. For the sake of money nearly all the landlords have mortgaged their estates to the banks. To get money the government borrows from rich people and bankers all over the world, and pays hundreds of millions of rubles yearly in interest on these loans.

For the sake of money everyone today is waging a fierce war against everyone else. Each tries to buy cheap and to sell dear, each tries to get ahead of the other, to sell as many goods as possible, to undercut the other, to conceal from him a profitable market or a profitable contract. In this general scramble for money the little man, the petty artisan or the small peasant, fares worse than all: he is always left behind by the rich merchant or the rich peasant. The little man never has any reserves; he lives from hand to mouth; each difficulty or accident compels him to pawn his last belongings or to sell his livestock at a trifling price. Once he has fallen into the clutches of a kulak or of a usurer he very rarely succeeds

in escaping from the net, and in most cases he is utterly ruined. Every year tens and hundreds of thousands of small peasants and artisans lock up their cottages, surrender their holdings to the commune *gratis* and become wage-workers, farm-hands, unskilled workers, proletarians. But the rich grow richer and richer in this struggle for money. They pile up millions and hundreds of millions of rubles in the banks and make profit not only with their own money, but also with the money deposited in the banks by others. The little man who deposits a few score or a few hundred rubles in a bank or a savings-bank receives interest, at the rate of three or four kopeks to the ruble; but the rich make millions out of these scores and use these millions to increase their turnover and make ten and twenty kopeks to the ruble.

That is why the Social-Democratic workers say that the only way to put an end to the poverty of the people is to change the existing order from top to bottom, throughout the country, and to establish a *socialist order*, in other words, to take the estates from the big landowners, the factories from the factory owners, and money capital from the bankers, to abolish their *private property* and turn it over to the whole working people throughout the country. When that is done the workers' labour will be made use of not by rich people living on the labour of others, but by the workers themselves and by those elected by them. The fruits of common labour and the advantages from all improvements and machinery will then benefit all the working people, all the workers. Wealth will then grow at a still faster rate because the workers will work better for themselves than they did for the capitalists; the working day will be shorter; the workers' standard of living will be higher; all their conditions of life will be completely changed.

But it is not an easy matter to change the existing order throughout the country. That requires a great deal of effort, a long and stubborn struggle. All the rich, all the



property-owners, all the *bourgeoisie*\* will defend their riches with all their might. The officials and the army will rise to defend all the *rich class*, because the government itself is in the hands of the rich class. The workers must rally as one man for the struggle against all those who live on the labour of others; the workers themselves must unite and help to unite all the poor in a single *working class*, in a single *proletarian class*. The struggle will not be easy for the working class, but it will certainly end in the workers' victory because the bourgeoisie, or those who live on the labour of others, are an insignificant minority of the population, while the working class is the vast majority. The workers against the property-owners means millions against thousands.

The workers in Russia are already beginning to unite for this great struggle in a single workers' Social-Democratic Party. Difficult as it is to unite in secret, hiding from the police, nevertheless, the organisation is growing and gaining strength. When the Russian people have won political liberty, the work of uniting the working class, the cause of socialism, will advance much more rapidly, more rapidly than it is advancing among the German workers.

### 3. Riches and Poverty, Property-Owners and Workers in the Countryside

We know now what the Social-Democrats want. They want to fight the whole of the rich class to free the people from poverty. In our countryside there is no less and, perhaps, even more poverty than there is in the towns. We shall not speak here about how great the poverty in the countryside is. Every worker who has been in the

\* Bourgeois means a property-owner. The bourgeoisie are all the property-owners taken together. A big bourgeois is the owner of big property. A petty bourgeois is the owner of small property. The words bourgeoisie and proletariat mean the same as property-owners and workers, the rich and the poor, or those who live on the labour of others and those who work for others for wages.

country and every peasant are well acquainted with want, hunger, and ruin in the countryside.

But the peasant does not know the *cause* of his distress, hunger and destitution, or *how* to rid himself of this want. To know this one must first find out what causes all want and poverty in both town and countryside. We have already dealt with this briefly, and we have seen that the poor peasants and rural workers must unite with the urban workers. But that is not enough. We must also find out what sort of people in the countryside will follow the rich, the property-owners, and what sort of people will follow the workers, the Social-Democrats. We must find out whether there are many peasants who, no less than the landlords, are able to acquire capital and live on the labour of others. Unless we get to the bottom of this matter, no amount of talking about poverty will be of any use, and the rural poor will not know *who* in the countryside must unite among themselves and with the urban workers, or *what* must be done to make it a *dependable* union and to prevent the peasant from being hoodwinked by his own kind, the rich peasant, as well as by the landlord.

To get to the bottom of this let us now see how strong the landlords are and how strong the rich peasants are in the countryside.

Let us begin with the landlords. We can judge of their strength in the first place by the amount of land they own as private property. The total amount of land in European Russia, including peasant allotment land and privately owned land, has been calculated at about 240,000,000 dessiatines\* (except the state lands, of which

\* These and all subsequent figures concerning the amount of land are very much out of date. They refer to the years 1877-78. But we have no more up-to-date figures. The Russian Government can only survive by keeping things in the dark, and that is why complete and truthful information about the life of the people throughout our country is so rarely collected. (A dessiatine=2.7 acres.—Ed.)

we shall speak separately). Out of this total of 240,000,000 dessiatines, 131,000,000 dessiatines of allotment land are held by the peasants, that is to say, by *over ten million households*; whereas 109,000,000 dessiatines are held by private owners, i.e., by *less than half a million families*. Thus, even if we take the average, every peasant family holds 13 dessiatines, while every family of private owners owns 218 dessiatines! But the distribution of the land is much more unequal, as we shall presently see.

Of the 109,000,000 dessiatines owned by private owners *seven million* are *royal demesnes*, in other words, the private property of the members of the imperial family. The tsar, with his family, is the first landlord, the biggest landowner in Russia. *One* family possesses *more* land than *half a million* peasant families! Further, the churches and monasteries own about *six million* dessiatines of land. Our priests preach frugality and abstinence to the peasants, but they themselves have, by fair means and foul, accumulated an enormous amount of land.

Further, about two million dessiatines are owned by the cities and towns, and an equal amount by various commercial and industrial companies and corporations. *Ninety-two million* dessiatines (the exact figure is 91,605,845, but to simplify matters we will quote round figures) belong to *less than half a million* (481,358) families of private owners. Half these families are quite small owners, owning less than ten dessiatines of land each, and all of them together own less than one million dessiatines. On the other hand, *sixteen thousand* families own *over one thousand* dessiatines each; and the total land owned by them amounts to *sixty-five million* dessiatines. What vast areas of land are concentrated in the hands of the big landowners is also to be seen in the fact that *just under one thousand families* (924) own *more than ten thousand* dessiatines each, and all together they own *twenty-seven million* dessiatines! One thousand families own as much land as is owned by two million peasant families.

Obviously, millions and tens of millions of people are *bound* to live in poverty and starvation and *will go on* living in poverty and starvation as long as such vast areas of land are owned by a few thousand of the rich. Obviously, the state authorities, the government itself (even the tsar's government) will always dance to the tune of these big landowners. Obviously, the rural poor can expect no help from anyone, or from any quarter, until they unite, combine in a single class to wage a stubborn, desperate struggle against the landlord class.

At this point we must observe that very many people in this country (including even many people of education) have a totally wrong idea about the strength of the landlord class; they say that the "state" owns much more land. These bad counsellors of the peasant say: "A large portion of the territory [i.e., of all the land] of Russia already belongs to the state." (These words are taken from the newspaper *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya*, No. 8, p. 8.) The mistake these people make arises from the following. They have heard that the *state* owns 150,000,000 dessiatines of land in European Russia. That is true. But they forget that these 150,000,000 dessiatines consist almost entirely of *uncultivable land and forests in the Far North*, in the Archangel, Vologda, Olonets, Vyatka, and Perm gubernias. Thus, the state has retained only that land which up to the present has been quite unfit for cultivation. The cultivable land owned by the state amounts to *less than four million* dessiatines. And these cultivable state lands (for example, in Samara Gubernia, where they are particularly extensive), are leased for very low rents, for next to nothing, to the rich. The rich lease thousands and tens of thousands of dessiatines of these lands and then sublet them to the peasants at exorbitant rents.

The people who say that the state owns a great deal of land are very bad counsellors of the peasant. The actual case is that the big private landowners (including the tsar personally) own a lot of good land, and the state itself

is in the hands of these big landowners. As long as the rural poor fail to unite, and by uniting become a formidable force, the "state" will always remain the obedient servant of the landlord class. There is another thing that must not be forgotten: formerly almost all the landlords were nobles. The nobility still owns a vast amount of land (in 1877-78, 115,000 nobles owned 73,000,000 desiatines). But today money, capital, has become the ruling power. Merchants and well-to-do peasants have bought very large amounts of land. It is estimated that in the course of thirty years (from 1863 to 1892) the nobility lost (i.e., sold more than they bought) land to the value of over six hundred million rubles. And merchants and honorary citizens have acquired land to the value of 250,000,000 rubles. Peasants, Cossacks, and "other rural inhabitants" (as our government calls the common folk, to distinguish them from the "gentry", the "clean public") have acquired land to the value of 300,000,000 rubles. Thus, on the average, every year, the peasants in the whole of Russia acquire land as private property to the value of 10,000,000 rubles.

And so, there are different sorts of peasants: some live in poverty and starvation; others grow rich. Consequently, the number of rich peasants who incline towards the landlords and will take the side of the rich against the workers is increasing. The rural poor who want to unite with the urban workers must carefully ponder over this and find out whether there are many rich peasants of this kind, how strong they are, and what kind of a union we need to fight this force. We have just mentioned the bad counsellors of the peasant. Those bad counsellors are fond of saying that the peasants already have such a union. That union is the *mir*, the village commune. The *mir*, they say, is a great force. The *mir* unites the peasants very closely; the organisation (i.e., the association, unity) of the peasants in the *mir* is colossal (i.e., enormous, boundless).

That is wrong. It is a tale. A tale invented by kind-

hearted people, but a tale nevertheless. If we listen to tales we shall only wreck our cause, the cause of uniting the rural poor with the urban workers. Let every rural inhabitant look round carefully: is the unity of the *mir*, is the peasant commune, at all like a union of the poor to fight *all* the rich, *all* those who live on the labour of others? No, it is not, and it cannot be. In every village, in every commune, there are many farm labourers, many impoverished peasants, and there are rich peasants who employ farm labourers and buy land "in perpetuity". These rich peasants are also members of the commune, and it is they who lord it in the commune because they are a force. But do we need a union to which the rich belong, and which is lorded over by the rich? Of course not. We need a union *to fight* the rich. And so, the unity of the *mir* is no good to us at all.

What we need is a voluntary union, a union only of people who have realised that they must unite with the urban workers. The village commune, however, is not a voluntary union; it is enforced by the state. The village commune does not consist of people who work for the rich and who want to unite to fight the rich. The village commune consists of all sorts of people, not because they want to be in it, but because their parents lived on the same land and worked for the same landlord, because the authorities have registered them as members of that commune. The poor peasants are not free to leave the commune; they are not free to accept in the commune a man whom the police have registered in another volost, but whom we may need for our union in a particular village. No, we need a very different kind of union, a voluntary union consisting only of labourers and poor peasants to fight all those who live on the labour of others.

The times when the *mir* was a force have long passed, never to return. The *mir* was a force when hardly any of the peasants were farm labourers, or workers wander-

ing over the length and breadth of Russia in search of a job, when there were hardly any rich peasants, when all were equally ground down by the feudal landlords. But now money has become the principal power. Members of the same commune will now fight one another for money like wild beasts. The moneyed peasants sometimes oppress and fleece their fellow peasants more than the landlords do. What we need today is not the unity of the *mir*, but a union against the *power of money*, against the rule of capital, a union of all the rural labourers and of all the poor peasants of different communes, a union of all the rural poor with the urban workers to fight both the landlords and the rich peasants.

We have seen how strong the landlords are. We must now see whether there are many rich peasants and how strong they are.

We estimate the strength of the landlords by the size of their estates, by the amount of land they own. The landlords are free to dispose of their land, free to buy land and to sell it. That is why it is possible to judge their strength very accurately by the amount of land they own. The peasants, however, still lack the right freely to dispose of their land; they are still semi-serfs, tied to their village commune. Hence, the strength of the rich peasants cannot be judged by the amount of allotment land they hold. The rich peasants do not grow rich on their allotments; they *buy* a considerable amount of land, buying both "in perpetuity" (i.e., as their private property) and "for a number of years" (i.e., on lease); they buy both from the landlords and from their fellow peasants, from those peasants who leave the land, or are compelled by want to let their holdings. It will therefore be more correct to divide the rich, middle, and poor peasants according to the number of horses they own. A peasant who owns many horses will nearly always be a rich peasant; if he keeps many draught animals it shows that he cultivates a lot of land, owns land besides

his communal allotment, and has money saved up. Moreover, we are in a position to calculate the number of peasants owning many horses in the whole of Russia (European Russia, exclusive of Siberia and the Caucasus). Of course, it must not be forgotten that we can speak of the whole of Russia only in averages: the different uyezds and gubernias vary to a considerable degree. For instance, in the neighbourhood of cities we often find rich peasant farmers who keep very few horses. Some of them engage in market-gardening—a profitable business; others keep few horses but many cows and sell milk. In all parts of Russia there are also peasants who do not make money out of the land, but engage in trade: they run creameries, hulling-mills, and other enterprises. Everybody who lives in the country very well knows of rich peasants in his own village or district. But we want to know how many there are in the whole of Russia and how strong they are, so that the poor peasant shall not have to guess and go about blindfold, as it were, but know exactly his friends and his foes.

Well then, let us see whether there are many peasants who are rich or poor in horses. We have already said that the total number of peasant households in Russia is estimated at about *ten million*. Between them they now own, probably, about *fifteen million* horses (about fourteen years ago the number was seventeen million, but it is smaller now). Thus, on the average, every *ten* households have *fifteen* horses. But the whole point is that some of them—a few—own many horses, while others—very many—own no horses, or very few. There are *at least three million* peasants, who own no horses, and about three and a half million *own one horse each*. All these are either utterly ruined or very poor peasants. We call these the rural poor. They number *six and a half million* out of a total of ten million, that is to say, *almost two-thirds*! Next come the middle peasants who own a pair of draught animals each. These peasants number *about*

two million households, owning *about four million* horses. Then come the rich peasants each of whom owns more than one pair of draught animals. Such comprise *one and a half million* households, but they own *seven and a half million* horses.\* Thus, about one-sixth of the total households own half the total number of horses.

Now that we know this we are in a position to judge fairly accurately the strength of the rich peasants. In number they are very few: in the different communes and volosts they will comprise ten to twenty households in every hundred. But these few households are the richest. Taking Russia as a whole, they own almost as many horses as all the other peasants taken together. That means that their land under crops must also amount to nearly half the total area sown to crops by the peasants. Such peasants harvest much more grain than they require for their families. They sell large quantities of grain. They grow grain not merely to feed themselves, but grow it chiefly for sale, to make money. Peasants like these can save money. They deposit it in savings-banks and banks. They buy land as property. We have

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\* We repeat that the figures quoted are average, approximate figures. The number of rich peasants may not be exactly a million and a half, but a million and a quarter, or a million and three-quarters, or even two million. That is not a big difference. The important thing here is not to count them up to the last thousand or last hundred thousand, but clearly to realise the strength and the position of the rich peasants so that we may be able to recognise our enemies and our friends, that we shall not allow ourselves to be deceived by tales or empty talk, but get to know accurately the position of the poor and especially the position of the rich.

Let every rural worker carefully study his own volost and the neighbouring volosts. He will see that we have counted correctly, and that, on the average, this will be the position everywhere: out of every hundred households there will be ten, at the most twenty, rich families, some twenty middle peasants, and all the rest are poor.

already said how much land the peasants all over Russia buy every year; nearly all this land goes to these few rich peasants. The rural poor have to think not of buying land, but of getting enough to eat. Often they have not enough money to buy grain, let alone land. Therefore, the banks in general and the Peasants' Bank in particular do not help all peasants to buy land (as is sometimes asserted by people who try to deceive the muzhik or by the very simple-minded), but only an insignificant number of peasants, only the rich peasants. Therefore, the peasant's evil counsellors whom we have mentioned tell an untruth when they say that the land is being bought by the peasants, that it is passing from capital to labour. The land can never pass to labour, that is, to the poor working man, because land has to be paid for with money. But the poor never have any money to spare. The land can go only to the rich, moneyed peasants, to capital, to those people against whom the rural poor must *fight* in alliance with the urban workers.

The rich peasants not only buy land in perpetuity; most often they take land for a number of years, on lease. By renting large plots they prevent the rural poor from getting land. For example, it has been calculated how much land rich peasants have rented in a single uyezd (Konstantinograd) in Poltava Gubernia. And what do we find? The number who rented thirty dessiatines or more per household is very small, only two out of every fifteen households. But these rich peasants have gained possession of *one half* of all the rented land, and each of them has on the average *seventy-five dessiatines* of the rented land! Or take Taurida Gubernia, where a calculation has been made of how much of the land rented by the peasants from the state through the *mir*, through the village commune, has been grabbed by the rich. It has been found that the rich, who account for only *one-fifth* of the total number of households, have grabbed *three-fourths* of the rented land. Everywhere

land goes to those who have money, and only the few rich have money.

Further, much land is now let by the peasants themselves. The peasants abandon their holdings because they have no livestock, no seed, nothing with which to run their farms. Today even land is of no use unless you have money. For instance, in Novouzensk Uyezd in Samara Gubernia, one, sometimes even two, out of every three rich peasant households *rent allotment land* in their own or in another commune. The allotments are let by those who have no horses, or only one horse. In Taurida Gubernia as much as *one-third* of all peasant households let their allotments. *One-fourth* of the peasant allotments, a quarter of a million dessiatines, are let. Of this quarter of a million dessiatines, one hundred and fifty thousand dessiatines (three-fifths) are rented by rich peasants! This, too, shows whether the unity of the *mir*, the commune, is of any use to the poor. In the village commune, he who has money has power. What we need is the unity of the poor of all communes.

Just as with land purchase, the peasants are deceived by talk about buying cheap ploughs, harvesters, and all sorts of improved implements. Zemstvo stores<sup>14</sup> and artels are set up and it is said: improved implements will better the conditions of the peasantry. That is mere deception. All these improved implements always go to the rich; the poor get next to nothing. They cannot think of buying ploughs and harvesters; they have enough to do to keep body and soul together! All this sort of "helping the peasants" is nothing but helping the rich. As for the mass of the poor, who have neither land, livestock, nor reserves, they will not benefit by the fact that the better implements will be cheaper. Here is an example. In an uyezd in Samara Gubernia all the improved implements belonging to the poor and to the rich peasants have been taken stock of. It was found that *one-fifth* of all households, i.e., the most well-to-do, owned almost

*three-fourths* of the improved implements, while the poor—*half* the households—had only *one-thirtieth*. Out of a total of 28,000 households, 10,000 possessed one horse each, or none; these 10,000 had only *seven* improved implements out of a total of 5,724 improved implements owned by all the peasant households in the uyezd. Seven out of 5,724—that is the share of the rural poor in all these farm improvements, in all this increase in the number of ploughs and harvesters which are supposed to help "all the peasantry"! That is what the rural poor must expect from those who talk about "improving peasant farming"!

Finally, one of the main features of the rich peasants is that they *hire farm-hands and day labourers*. Like the landlords, the rich peasants also live on the labour of others. Like the landlords, they grow rich because the mass of the peasants are ruined and pauperised. Like the landlords, they try to squeeze as much work as they can out of their farm-hands and to pay them as little as possible. If millions of peasants were not utterly ruined and compelled to go to work for others, become hired labourers, sell their labour-power—the rich peasants could not exist, could not carry on their farms. There would be no "abandoned" allotments for them to pick up and no labourers for them to hire. The million and a half rich peasants throughout Russia certainly hire no less than a *million* farm-hands and day labourers. Obviously, in the great struggle between the propertied class and the class of the propertyless, between masters and workers, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the rich peasants will take the side of the property-owners against the working class.

We now know the position and the strength of the rich peasantry. Let us examine the conditions of the rural poor.

We have already said that the rural poor comprise the vast majority, almost two-thirds, of the peasant house-

holds throughout Russia. To begin with, the number of households without horses cannot be less than *three million*—probably even more than that today, perhaps three and a half million. Every famine year, every crop failure, ruins tens of thousands of farms. The population grows, life on the land becomes more crowded, but all the best land has been grabbed by the landlords and the rich peasants. And so, every year more and more people are ruined, go to the towns and the factories, take work as farm-hands, or become unskilled labourers. A peasant who has no horse is one who has become quite poor. He is a proletarian. He gains a living (if you can call it living; it would be truer to say that he just contrives to keep body and soul together) not from the land, not from his farm, but *by working for hire*. He is brother to the town worker. Even land is of no use to the peasant without a horse: half the households without horses *let their allotments*, while some even surrender them to the commune for nothing (and sometimes even pay the difference between the taxes and the expected income from the land!) because they are not in a position to till their land. A peasant who has no horse sows one dessiatine, or two at the most. He always has to buy additional grain (if he has the money to buy it with)—his own crop will never suffice to feed him. Peasants who own one horse each, and there are about three and a half million such households throughout Russia, are not very much better off. Of course, there are exceptions, and we have already said that, here and there, there are peasants with one horse each who are doing middling well, or are even rich. But we are not speaking of exceptions, of individual localities, but of Russia as a whole. If we take the entire mass of peasants who have one horse each, there can be no doubt that they are a mass of paupers. Even in the agricultural gubernias the peasant who has one horse sows only three or four dessiatines, rarely five; his crop does not suffice either. Even in a good year his

food is no better than that of a peasant without a horse—which means that he is always underfed, always starves. His farm is in decay, his livestock is poor and short of fodder, and he is not in a position to look after his land properly. The peasant who owns one horse—in Voronezh Gubernia, for instance—can afford to spend (not counting expenditure on fodder) not more than *twenty rubles a year* on the whole of his farm! (A rich peasant spends *ten times as much*.) Twenty rubles a year for rent, to buy livestock, repair his wooden plough and other implements, pay the shepherd, and for everything else! Do you call that farming? It is sheer misery, hard labour, endless drudgery. It is natural that some of the peasants with one horse each, and not a few, should also *let their allotments*. Even land is of little use to a pauper. He has no money and his land does not even provide him with enough to eat, let alone with money. But money is needed for everything: for food, for clothing, for the farm, and to pay taxes. In Voronezh Gubernia, a peasant who owns one horse usually has to pay *about eighteen rubles* a year in taxes alone, while he cannot make more than seventy-five rubles a year to meet *all* his expenses. Under these circumstances it is sheer mockery to talk about buying land, about improved implements, about agricultural banks: those things were not invented for the poor.

Where is the peasant to get the money from? He has to look for “earnings” on the side. A peasant who owns one horse, like the peasant who owns none, ekes out a living only with the help of “earnings”. But what does “earnings” mean? It means working for others, working for hire. It means that the peasant who owns one horse has half ceased to be an independent farmer and has become a hireling, a proletarian. That is why such peasants are called *semi-proletarians*. They, too, are brothers to the town workers because they, too, are fleeced in every way by all sorts of employers. They,



too, have no way out, no salvation, except by uniting with the Social-Democrats to fight all the rich, all the property-owners. Who works on the building of railways? Who is fleeced by the contractors? Who goes out lumbering and timber-floating? Who works as farm-hand? Or as day labourer? Who does the unskilled work in the towns and ports? It is always the rural poor, the peasants who have no horses or only one each. It is always the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians. And what vast numbers of these there are in Russia! It has been calculated that throughout Russia (exclusive of the Caucasus and Siberia) eight and sometimes even nine *million* passports are taken out yearly. Those are all for migratory workers. They are peasants only in name; actually, they are hirelings, wage-labourers. They must all unite in one union with the town workers—and every ray of light and knowledge that reaches the countryside will strengthen and consolidate this unity.

There is one more point about “earnings” that must not be forgotten. All kinds of officials and people who think as the officials do are fond of saying that the peasant, the muzhik, “needs” two things: land (but not very much of it—besides, he cannot get much, because the rich have grabbed it all!) and “earnings”. Therefore, they say, in order to help the people, it is necessary to introduce more trades in the rural districts, to “provide” more “earnings”. Such talk is sheer hypocrisy. For the poor, “earnings” mean wage-labour. To “provide earnings” for the peasant means transforming him into a wage-labourer. Fine sort of assistance this! For the rich peasants there are other kinds of “earnings”, which require capital, for instance, the building of a flour-mill or some other plant, the purchase of threshing-machines, trade, and so on. To confuse the earnings of moneyed people with the *wage-labour* of the poor means deceiving the poor. Of course, this deception is to the advantage of the rich; it is to their advantage to make it appear

that all kinds of “earnings” are open to and within the reach of *all* the peasants. But he who really cares for the welfare of the poor will tell *the whole truth and nothing but the truth*.

It remains for us to consider the middle peasants. We have already seen that, on the average, taking Russia as a whole, we must regard as a middle peasant one who has a pair of draught animals, and that out of a total of ten million households there are about two million middle peasant households in the country. The middle peasant stands between the rich peasant and the proletarian, and that is why he is called a middle peasant. His standard of living, too, is middling: in a good year he makes ends meet on his farm, but poverty is always knocking at the door. He has either very few savings or none at all. That is why his farm is in a precarious position. He finds it hard to get money; only very seldom can he make as much money out of his farm as he needs, and if he does, it is just barely enough. To go out for earnings would mean neglecting the farm and everything would go to rack and ruin. Nevertheless, many of the middle peasants cannot get along without earnings: they, too, have to hire themselves to others; want compels them to go into bondage to the landlord, to fall into debt. And once in debt the middle peasant is hardly ever able to get out of it, for unlike the rich peasant he has no steady income. Therefore, once he falls into debt it is as if he had put his neck in a halter. He remains a debtor until he is utterly ruined. It is chiefly the middle peasant who falls into bondage to the landlord, because for work paid on a job basis the landlord needs a peasant who is not ruined, one who owns a pair of horses and all implements required in farming. It is not easy for the middle peasant to go elsewhere in search of earnings, so he goes into bondage to the landlord in return for grain, permission to use pasture land, the lease of the cut-off lands, and money advances during the winter.



The middle peasant is hard pressed, not only by the landlord and the kulak, but also by his rich neighbour, who is always one jump ahead when he wants to acquire more land and never misses an opportunity to squeeze him in some way or other. Such is the life of the middle peasant; he is neither fish nor fowl. He can be neither a real master nor a worker. All the middle peasants strive to become masters: they want to be property-owners, but very few succeed. There are a few, a very few, who even hire farm-hands or day labourers, try to become rich on the labour of others, to rise to wealth on the backs of others. But most middle peasants have no money to hire labourers—in fact, they have to hire themselves out.

Wherever a struggle begins between the rich and the poor, between the property-owners and the workers, the middle peasant remains in between, not knowing which side to take. The rich call him to their side: you, too, are a master, a man of property, they say to him, you have nothing to do with the penniless workers. But the workers say: the rich will cheat and fleece you, and there is no other salvation for you but to help us in our fight against all the rich. This struggle for the middle peasant is going on everywhere, in all countries, wherever the Social-Democratic workers are fighting to emancipate the working people. In Russia the struggle is just beginning. That is why we must most carefully study the matter and understand clearly the deceptions the rich resort to in order to win over the middle peasant; we must learn how to expose these deceptions and help the middle peasant to find his real friends. If the Russian Social-Democratic workers at once take the right road, we shall establish a firm alliance between the rural workers and the urban workers more quickly than our comrades, the German workers, and we shall speedily achieve victory over all the enemies of the working people.

#### 4. What Path Should the Middle Peasant Take? Should He Take the Side of the Property-Owners and the Rich or the Side of the Workers and the Poor?

All property-owners, the entire bourgeoisie, try to win over the middle peasant by promising him all sorts of ways to improve his farm (cheap ploughs, agricultural banks, the introduction of grass sowing, cheap livestock and fertilisers, and so on) and also by inducing the peasant to join all sorts of agricultural societies (co-operatives, as they are called in books) which unite all kinds of farmers with the object of improving farming methods. In this way the bourgeoisie try to keep the middle and even the small peasant, even the semi-proletarian, from uniting with the workers, and try to induce them to side with the rich, with the bourgeoisie, in their fight against the workers, the proletariat.

To this the Social-Democratic workers reply: improved farming is an excellent thing. There is no harm in buying cheaper ploughs; nowadays even a merchant, if he is not a fool, tries to sell more cheaply to attract customers. But when a poor or a middle peasant is told that improved farming and cheaper ploughs will help all of them to escape from poverty and to get on their feet, without touching the rich, *this is deception*. All these improvements, lower prices, and co-operatives (societies for the sale and purchase of goods) *benefit the rich far more than anybody else*. The rich grow stronger and oppress the poor and middle peasants more and more. As long as the rich remain rich, as long as they own most of the land, livestock, implements, and money—as long as all this lasts, not only the poor but even the middle peasants will *never* be able to escape from want. One or two middle peasants may be able to climb into the ranks of the rich with the aid of all these improvements and co-operatives, but the people as a whole, and all the middle peasants, will sink deeper and deeper into

poverty. For *all* middle peasants to become rich, the rich themselves must be turned out, and they can be turned out only if the urban workers and the rural poor are united.

The bourgeoisie say to the middle (and even to the small) peasant: we will sell you land at a low price, and ploughs at a low price, but in return you must sell yourselves to us and give up fighting all the rich.

The Social-Democratic worker says: if you are really offered goods at a low price, why not buy them, if you have the money; that is sound business. But you should never sell yourselves. To give up the fight in alliance with the urban workers against the entire bourgeoisie would mean remaining in poverty and want for ever. If goods become cheaper, the rich will gain still more and become richer. But those who never have money to spare will gain nothing from cheaper goods until they take that money from the bourgeoisie.

Let us take an example. Those who support the bourgeoisie make much ado about all sorts of co-operatives (societies for buying cheap and selling profitably). There are even people who call themselves "Social-Revolutionaries", who, echoing the bourgeoisie, also talk loudly about the peasant needing nothing so much as co-operatives. All sorts of co-operatives are beginning to spring up in Russia, too, although there are still very few of them here, and there will not be many until we enjoy political liberty. Take Germany: there the peasants have many co-operatives of all kinds. But see who gains most from these co-operatives. In all Germany, 140,000 farmers belong to societies for the sale of milk and dairy products, and these 140,000 farmers (we again take round figures for the sake of simplicity) own 1,100,000 cows. It is calculated that there are *four million* poor peasants in Germany. Of these, only 40,000 belong to co-operatives: thus, *only one* out of every hundred poor peasants enjoys the benefits of these co-operatives. These 40,000 poor peasants own only 100,000 cows in

all. Further, the middle farmers, the middle peasants, number *one million*; of these, 50,000 belong to co-operatives (that is to say, five out of every hundred) and they own a total of 200,000 cows. Finally, the rich farmers (i.e., both landlords and rich peasants) number *one-third of a million*; of these, 50,000 belong to co-operatives (that is to say, *seventeen* out of every hundred!) and they own 800,000 cows!

That is whom the co-operatives help first and foremost. That is how the peasant is deceived by those people who talk loudly about saving the middle peasant by means of such societies for buying cheap and selling profitably. It is, indeed, at a very low price that the bourgeoisie want to "buy off" the peasant from the Social-Democrats, who call upon both the poor and the middle peasant to join them.

In our country, too, co-operative cheese dairies and amalgamated dairies are beginning to be formed. In our country, too, there are plenty of people who shout: artels, the *mir*, and co-operatives—that is what the peasant needs. But see who gains by these artels, co-operatives, and renting by the *mir*. Out of every hundred households in our country, at least twenty own no cows at all; thirty own only one cow each: these sell milk from dire need, their own children have to go without milk, starve, and die off like flies. The rich peasants, however, own three, four, and more cows each, and these rich peasants own half the total number of cows owned by peasants. Who, then, gains from co-operative cheese dairies? Obviously, the landlords and the peasant bourgeoisie gain first of all. Obviously, it is *to their advantage* that the middle peasants and the poor should follow in their wake and that they should believe that the means of escaping from want is not the struggle of all the workers against the entire bourgeoisie, but the striving of individual small farmers to climb out of their present position and get into the ranks of the rich.

This striving is fostered and encouraged in every way by all the champions of the bourgeoisie, who pretend to be the champions and friends of the small peasant. And many simple-minded people fail to see the wolf in sheep's clothing, and repeat this bourgeois deception in the belief that they are helping the poor and middle peasants. For instance, they argue in books and in speeches that small-scale farming is the most profitable, most remunerative form of farming, that small-scale farming is flourishing, and that is why, they say, there are so many small producers in agriculture everywhere, and why they cling to their land (and not because all the best lands are owned by the bourgeoisie, and all the money, too, while the poor have to live in drudgery all their lives crowded on tiny patches of land!). The small peasant does not need much money, these smooth-tongued people say; the small and the middle peasants are more thrifty and more industrious than the big farmers, and know how to live a simpler life; instead of buying hay for their cattle, they are content to feed them on straw. Instead of buying an expensive machine, they get up earlier and toil longer and do as much as a machine does; instead of paying money to strangers for doing repairs, the peasant himself takes his hatchet on a Sunday and does a bit of carpentry—and that is much cheaper than the way a big farmer goes about it; instead of feeding an expensive horse or an ox, he uses his cow for ploughing. In Germany all the poor peasants use cows to haul their ploughs, and in our country, too, the people have become so impoverished that they are beginning to use not only cows, but men and women to pull ploughs! How profitable, how cheap all this is! How praiseworthy of the middle and small peasants to be so industrious, so diligent, to live such simple lives, and not to waste their time on nonsense, not to think of socialism, but only of their farms, not to strive towards the workers who organise strikes against the bourgeoisie, but towards

the rich and try to join the ranks of respectable folk! If only all were so industrious and so diligent, and lived frugally, and did not drink, and saved more money, and spent less on calico, and had fewer children—all would be happy and there would be no poverty and no want!

Such are the sweet songs the bourgeoisie sings to the middle peasant, and there are simpletons who believe these songs and repeat them!\* Actually, all these honeyed words are nothing but deceit and mockery of the peasant. What these smooth-tongued people call cheap and profitable farming is the want, the dire need, which forces the middle and small peasant to work from morning till night, to begrudge himself a crust of bread, to grudge every penny he spends. Of course, what can be "cheaper" and "more profitable" than to wear the same pair of trousers for three years, go about barefoot in summer, repair one's wooden plough with a piece of rope, and feed one's cow on rotten straw from the roof! Put a bourgeois or a rich peasant on such a "cheap" and "profitable" farm, and he will soon forget all this honeyed talk!

The people who extol small-scale farming sometimes want to help the peasant, but actually they only do him harm. With their honeyed words they deceive the peasant in the same way as people are deceived by a lottery. I shall tell you what a lottery is. Let us suppose I have a cow, worth 50 rubles. I want to sell the cow by means of a lottery, so I offer everyone tickets at a ruble each.

\* In Russia these simpletons who wish the peasant well, but who every now and then start this sort of honeyed talk, are called "Narodniks" or the "advocates of small-scale farming". The "Socialist-Revolutionaries", for lack of understanding, follow in their footsteps. In Germany also there are many smooth-tongued people. One of them, Eduard David, has recently written a big book, in which he says that small farms are infinitely more profitable than large ones, because the small peasant does not spend money needlessly, keeps no horses for ploughing, and is content to use his cow instead, from which he also gets milk.

Everyone has a chance of getting the cow for one ruble! People are tempted and the rubles pour in. When I have collected a hundred rubles I proceed to draw the lottery: the one whose ticket is drawn gets the cow for a ruble, the others get nothing. Was the cow "cheap" for the people? No, it was very dear, because the total money they paid was double the value of the cow, because two persons (the one who ran the lottery and the one who won the cow) gained without doing any work, and gained at the expense of the ninety-nine who lost their money. Thus, those who say that lotteries are advantageous to the people are simply practising deceit on the people. Those who promise to deliver the peasants from poverty and want by means of co-operatives of every kind (societies for buying cheap and selling profitably), improved farming, banks, and all that sort of thing, are deceiving them in exactly the same way. Just as in a lottery where there is one winner and all the rest are losers, so it is with these things: one middle peasant may manage to get rich, but ninety-nine of his fellow peasants bend their backs all their lives, never escape from want, and even sink more deeply into poverty. Let every villager examine his commune and the whole district a little more closely: are there many middle peasants who become rich and forget want? And how many are there who can never rid themselves of want? How many are ruined and leave their villages? As we have seen, it has been calculated that in the whole of Russia there are not more than two million middle peasant farms. Suppose there were ten times as many societies of all kinds for buying cheap and selling profitably as there are now. What would the result be? It would be a big figure if a hundred thousand middle peasants succeeded in raising themselves to the level of the rich. What would that mean? It would mean that out of every hundred middle peasants, five would become rich. But what about the other ninety-five? They would be in the same straits as

ever, and many of them would be in even greater difficulties! And the poor would only be impoverished all the more!

Of course, the bourgeoisie want nothing more than that the largest possible number of middle and small peasants should strive to get rich, *believe* in the possibility of escaping from poverty without fighting the bourgeoisie, place their *hopes* in diligence and frugality and in becoming rich, and not in uniting with the rural and urban workers. The bourgeoisie do all they can to foster this deceptive faith and hope in the peasant, and try to lull him with honeyed words.

To expose the deception practised by these smooth-tongued people it is sufficient to ask them three questions.

Question one: can the working people rid themselves of want and poverty when, in Russia, a hundred million dessiatines out of two hundred and forty million dessiatines of arable land belong to private landowners? When sixteen thousand very big landowners possess sixty-five million dessiatines?

Question two: can the working people rid themselves of want and poverty when one and a half million rich peasant households (out of a total of ten million) have concentrated in their hands half of all peasants' land under crops, half the total number of horses and livestock owned by peasants, and much more than half the total peasant stocks and savings? When this peasant bourgeoisie is growing richer and richer, oppressing the poor and middle peasants, making money out of the labour of others, of the farm-hands and day labourers? When six and a half million households consist of poor peasants, destitute, always starving, and reduced to winning a miserable crust of bread by all kinds of wage-labour?

Question three: can the working people rid themselves of want and poverty when money has become the ruling

power, when everything can be bought for money—factories and land, and even men and women can be bought to serve as wage-workers, wage-slaves? When no one can live or run a farm without money? When the small farmer, the poor peasant, has to wage a struggle against the big farmer to get money? When a few thousand landlords, merchants, factory owners, and bankers have concentrated in their hands hundreds of millions of rubles, and, moreover, control all the banks, where thousands of millions of rubles are deposited?

No honeyed words about the advantages of small-scale farming or of co-operatives will enable you to evade these questions. To these questions there can be only one answer: the real “co-operation” that can save the working people is the *union* of the rural poor with the Social-Democratic workers in the towns to fight the entire bourgeoisie. The faster *this* union grows and becomes strong, the sooner will the middle peasant realise that the promises of the bourgeoisie are all lies, and the sooner will the middle peasant come over to our side.

The bourgeoisie know this, and that is why, in addition to honeyed words, they spread all sorts of lies about the Social-Democrats. They say that the Social-Democrats want to deprive the middle and small peasants of their property. *That is a lie.* The Social-Democrats want to deprive of their property only the big proprietors, *only those who live on the labour of others.* The Social-Democrats *will never take away the property of the small and middle farmers who do not hire labourers.* The Social-Democrats defend and champion the interests of all the working people, not only the interests of the urban workers; who are more class-conscious and more united than the others, but also of the agricultural workers, and of those small artisans and peasants who do not hire workers, do not strive towards the rich, and do not go over to the side of the bourgeoisie. *The Social-Democrats are fighting for all improvements in the conditions of the*

*workers and peasants* which can be introduced immediately, when we have not yet destroyed the rule of the bourgeoisie, and which will help them in the struggle against the bourgeoisie. But the Social-Democrats do not deceive the peasant; they tell him *the whole truth*, plainly tell him in advance that no improvements will rid the people of want and poverty as long as the bourgeoisie is in power. To enable *all the people* to know what the Social-Democrats are and what they want, the Social-Democrats have drawn up a *programme*. A programme is a brief, clear, and precise statement of *all the things a party is striving and fighting for.* The Social-Democratic Party is the only party that advances a clear and precise programme for all the people to know and see, and for the party to consist only of people who really want to fight for the emancipation of all the working people from the yoke of the bourgeoisie, and who properly understand who must unite for this fight and how the fight must be conducted. Furthermore, the Social-Democrats believe that they must *explain* in their programme, in a direct, frank, and precise way, *the causes of the poverty and want among the working people*, and why the unity of the workers is becoming wider and stronger. It is not enough to say that life is hard and to call for revolt; every tub-thumper can do that, but it is of little use. The working people must clearly understand *why* they are living in such poverty and *with whom they must unite* in order to fight to liberate themselves from want.

We have already stated what the Social-Democrats want; we have explained the causes of the working people's want and poverty; we have indicated whom the rural poor must fight and with whom they must unite for this fight.

We shall now explain *what improvements* we can win *at once* by fighting for them, improvements in the lives of the workers and in the lives of the peasants.

### 5. What Improvements Are the Social-Democrats Striving to Obtain for the Whole People and for the Workers?

The Social-Democrats are fighting for the liberation of all the working people from all robbery, oppression, and injustice. To become free the working class must first of all become united. And to become united it must have freedom to unite, have the right to unite, have *political liberty*. We have already said that autocratic government means enslavement of the people by the officials and the police. Political liberty is therefore needed by the whole people, except a handful of courtiers and a few money-bags and high dignitaries who are received at court. But most of all, political liberty is needed by the workers and the peasants. The rich can escape the self-will and the tyranny of officials and the police by buying them off. The rich can make their complaints heard in the highest places. That is why the police and the officials take much fewer liberties with the rich than with the poor. The workers and the peasants have no money to buy off the police or the officials; they have no one to complain to and are not in a position to sue them in court. The workers and the peasants will never rid themselves of the extortions, tyranny, and insults of the police and the officials as long as there is no *elective government*, as long as there is no *national assembly of deputies*. Only such a national assembly of deputies can free the people from enslavement by the officials. Every intelligent peasant must support the Social-Democrats, who first and foremost demand of the tsarist government *the convocation of a national assembly of deputies*. The deputies must be elected by all, irrespective of social-estate, irrespective of wealth or poverty. The elections must be free, without any interference on the part of the officials; they must be carried out under the

supervision of such that enjoy the people's confidence, and not of police officers or the rural superintendents.<sup>15</sup> Under such conditions, deputies representing the entire people will be able to discuss all the needs of the people, and introduce a better state of affairs in Russia.

The Social-Democrats demand that the police be deprived of the power to imprison anyone without trial. Officials must be severely punished for arbitrarily arresting anyone. To put an end to their self-assumed power, they must be chosen by the people, and everyone must have the right to lodge a complaint against any official directly in a court. What is the use of complaining to the rural superintendent about a police officer, or to the governor about the rural superintendent? The rural superintendent will, of course, always protect the police officer and the governor will always protect the rural superintendent, while the complainant will get into trouble. He runs a fair chance of being put into prison or deported to Siberia. The officials will be curbed only when everyone in Russia (as in all other countries) has the right to complain both to the national assembly and to the elected courts, and to speak freely of his needs, to write about them in the newspapers.

The Russian people are still in feudal dependence upon the officials. Without permission from the officials the people cannot call meetings, or get books and newspapers printed. Is that not feudal dependence? If meetings cannot be freely called, or books freely printed, how can one obtain redress against the officials, or against the rich? Of course, the officials suppress every book, every utterance that tells the truth about the people's poverty. The present pamphlet, too, has to be printed by the Social-Democratic Party secretly and circulated secretly: anyone who is found in possession of this pamphlet will make the acquaintance of courts and prisons. But the Social-Democratic workers are not afraid of this: they print more and more, and give the people more and

more truthful books to read. And no prisons, no persecution can halt the fight for the people's freedom!

The Social-Democrats demand that the social-estates be abolished, and that all the citizens of the state enjoy exactly the same rights. Today the social-estates are divided into tax-paying and non-tax-paying, into privileged and non-privileged; we have blue blood and common blood; even the birch has been retained for the common people. In no other country are the workers and peasants in such a position of inferiority. In no country except Russia are there different laws for different social-estates. It is time the Russian people, too, demanded that every muzhik should possess *all the rights* possessed by the nobility. Is it not a disgrace that the birch should still be used and that a *tax-paying* social-estate should be in existence more than forty years after the abolition of serfdom?

The Social-Democrats demand that the people shall have complete freedom of movement and occupation. What does *freedom of movement* mean? It means that the peasant should be free to go wherever he pleases, to move to whatever place he wants to, to live in any village or town he chooses without having to ask for permission from anyone. It means that passports should be abolished in Russia too (in other countries passports were abolished long ago), that no local police officer or rural superintendent should dare to hinder any peasant from settling or working wherever he pleases. The Russian peasant is still so much the serf of the officials that he is not free to move to a town, or to settle in a new district. The minister issues orders that the governors should not allow *unauthorised* settlement! A governor knows better than the peasant what place is good for the peasant! The peasant is a little child and must not move without permission of the authorities! Is that not feudal dependence? Is it not an insult to the people when any profligate nobleman is allowed to lord it over grown-up farmers?

There is a book called *Crop Failure and the Distress of the People* (famine), written by the present "Minister of Agriculture" Mr. Yermolov. This book says in so many words: the peasant must not change residence as long as their worships the landlords need hands. The minister says this quite openly, without the least embarrassment: he thinks the peasant will not hear what he is saying and will not understand. Why allow people to go away when the landlords need cheap labour? The more crowded the people are on the land the more that is to the landlords' advantage; the poorer the peasants are, the more cheaply can they be hired and the more meekly will they submit to oppression of every kind. Formerly, the bailiffs looked after the landlord's interests, now the rural superintendents and governors do that. Formerly, the bailiffs ordered the flogging of peasants in the stables; now the rural superintendent in the volost administration office orders the flogging.

The Social-Democrats demand that the standing army be abolished and that a militia be established in its stead, that all the people be armed. A standing army is an army that is divorced from the people and trained to shoot down the people. If the soldier were not locked up for years in barracks and inhumanly drilled there, would he ever agree to shoot down his brothers, the workers and the peasants? Would he go against the starving peasants? A standing army is not needed in the least to protect the country from attack by an enemy; a people's militia is sufficient. If every citizen is armed, Russia need fear no enemy. And the people would be relieved of the yoke of the military clique. The upkeep of this clique costs *hundreds of millions of rubles a year*, and all this money is collected from the people; that is why the taxes are so heavy and why it becomes increasingly difficult to live. The military clique still further increases the power of the officials and police over the people. This clique is needed to plunder foreign peoples, for instance, to take



the land from the Chinese. This does not ease but, on the contrary, increases the people's burden because of greater taxation. The substitution of the armed nation for the standing army would enormously ease the burden of all the workers and all the peasants.

Similarly, *the abolition of indirect taxation*, which the Social-Democrats demand, would be an enormous relief. Indirect taxes are such taxes that are not imposed directly on land or on a house but are paid by the people *indirectly*, in the form of higher prices for what they buy. The state imposes taxes on sugar, vodka, kerosene, matches, and all sorts of articles of consumption; these taxes are paid to the Treasury by the merchant or by the manufacturer, but, of course, he does not pay it out of his own pocket, but out of the money his customers pay him. The price of vodka, sugar, kerosene, and matches goes up, and every purchaser of a bottle of vodka or of a pound of sugar has to pay the tax in addition to the price of the goods. For instance, if, say, you pay fourteen kopeks for a pound of sugar, four kopeks (approximately) constitute the tax: the sugar manufacturer has already paid the tax to the Treasury and is now exacting from every customer the sum he has paid. Thus, indirect taxes are taxes on articles of consumption, taxes which are paid by the purchaser in the form of higher prices for the articles he buys. It is sometimes said that indirect taxation is the fairest form of taxation: you pay according to the amount you buy. But this is not true. Indirect taxation is the most unfair form of taxation, because it is harder for the poor to pay indirect taxes than it is for the rich. The rich man's income is ten times or even a hundred times as large as that of the peasant or worker. But does the rich man need a hundred times as much sugar? Or ten times as much vodka, or matches, or kerosene? Of course not! A rich family will buy twice, at most, three times as much kerosene, vodka, or sugar as a poor family. But that means that the rich man will

pay a *smaller part* of his income in taxes than the poor man. Let us suppose that the poor peasant's income is two hundred rubles a year; let us suppose he buys sixty rubles' worth of such goods as are taxed and which are consequently dearer (the tax on sugar, matches, kerosene, is an *excise duty*, i.e., the manufacturer pays the duty before placing the goods on the market; in the case of vodka, a state monopoly, the state simply raises the price; cotton goods, iron and other goods have risen in price because cheap foreign goods are not admitted into Russia unless a heavy duty is paid on them). Of these sixty rubles *twenty rubles* will constitute the tax. Thus, out of every ruble of his income the poor peasant will pay *ten kopeks* in indirect taxes (exclusive of direct taxes, land redemption payments, quit-rent, land tax, Zemstvo, volost and *mir* taxes). The rich peasant has an income of one thousand rubles; he will buy one hundred and fifty rubles' worth of taxed goods and pay *fifty rubles* in taxes (included in the one hundred and fifty rubles). Thus, out of every ruble of his income the rich peasant will pay only *five kopeks* in indirect taxes. The richer the man, the *smaller* is the share of his income that he pays in indirect taxes. That is why indirect taxation is *the most unfair* form of taxation. Indirect taxes are taxes on the poor. The peasants and workers together form nine-tenths of the population and pay nine-tenths or eight-tenths of the total indirect taxation. And, in all probability, the income of the peasants and workers amounts to no more than four-tenths of the whole national income! And so, the Social-Democrats demand the abolition of indirect taxation and the introduction of a *progressive* tax on incomes and inheritances. That means that the higher the income the higher the tax. Those who have an income of a thousand rubles must pay one kopek in the ruble; if the income is two thousand, two kopeks in the ruble must be paid, and so on. The smallest incomes (let us say incomes of under four hundred rubles)



do not pay anything at all. The richest pay the highest taxes. Such a tax, an *income-tax*, or more exactly, a *progressive income-tax*, would be much fairer than indirect taxes. And that is why the Social-Democrats are striving to secure the abolition of indirect taxation and the introduction of a progressive income-tax. Of course, all the property-owners, all the bourgeoisie, object to this measure and resist it. Only through a firm alliance between the rural poor and the urban workers can this improvement be *won* from the bourgeoisie.

Finally, the *free education* of children, which the Social-Democrats demand, would be a very important improvement for the whole of the people, and for the rural poor in particular. Today there are far fewer schools in the countryside than in the towns, and everywhere it is only the rich classes, only the bourgeoisie, who are in a position to give their children a good education. Only free and compulsory education for *all children* can get the people, at least to some extent, out of their present state of ignorance. The rural poor suffer most from this ignorance and stand in particular need of education. But, of course, we need real, free education, and not the sort the officials and the priests want to give.

The Social-Democrats further demand that everybody shall have full and unrestricted right to profess any religion he pleases. Of the European countries Russia and Turkey are the only ones which have retained shameful laws against persons belonging to any other faith than the Orthodox, laws against schismatics, sectarians, and Jews. These laws either totally ban a certain religion, or prohibit its propagation, or deprive those who belong to it of certain rights. All these laws are as unjust, as arbitrary and as disgraceful as can be. Everybody must be perfectly free, not only to profess whatever religion he pleases, *but also to spread or change his religion*. No official should have the right even to ask anyone about

his religion: that is a matter of each person's conscience and no one has any right to interfere. There should be no "*established*" religion or church. All religions and all churches should have equal status in law. The clergy of the various religions should be paid salaries by those who belong to their religions, but the state should not use state money to support any religion whatever, should not grant money to maintain any clergy, Orthodox, schismatic, sectarian, or any other. That is what the Social-Democrats are fighting for, and until these measures are carried out without any reservation and without any subterfuge, the people will not be freed from the disgraceful police persecution of religion, or from the no less disgraceful police hand-outs to any one of those religions.

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We have seen what improvements the Social-Democrats are out to achieve for all the people, and especially for the poor. Now let us see what improvements they strive to achieve for the workers, not only for factory and urban workers, but for agricultural workers too. The factory workers live in more cramped conditions; they work in large workshops, so it is easier for them to avail themselves of the assistance of educated Social-Democrats. For all these reasons the urban workers started the struggle against the employers much earlier than the others and have achieved more considerable improvements; they have also obtained the passing of factory laws. But the Social-Democrats are fighting for the extension of these improvements to *all* the workers: to handicraftsmen both in town and country, who work for employers at home; to the wage-workers employed by petty masters and artisans; to workers in the building trades (carpenters, bricklayers, etc.); to lumbermen and unskilled labourers, *and also the agricultural labourers*.

All over Russia, all these workers are now beginning to unite, following the example of, and aided by, the factory workers, to unite for the struggle for better conditions of life, for a shorter working day, for *higher wages*. And the Social-Democratic Party has set itself the task of supporting *all* workers in their struggle for a better life, of helping them to organise (to unite) the most resolute and reliable workers in strong unions, of helping them by circulating pamphlets and leaflets, by sending experienced workers to those new to the movement, and in general helping all the workers in every possible way. When we have won political liberty, we shall have our people in a national assembly of deputies, worker deputies, Social-Democrats, and, like their comrades in other countries, they will demand laws for the benefit of the workers.

We shall not enumerate here *all* the improvements the Social-Democratic Party is striving to obtain for the workers: they have been set out in our programme and explained in detail in the pamphlet, *The Workers' Cause in Russia*. Here it will be sufficient to mention the most important of those improvements. The working day must not be longer than eight hours. One day a week must always be a day of rest. Overtime must be absolutely banned, and so must night-work. Children up to the age of sixteen must be given free education and, consequently, must not be allowed to work for hire until that age. Women must not work in trades injurious to their health. The employer must compensate the workers for all injury caused during work, for example, for injury caused when working on threshing-machines, winnowing-machines, and so forth. All wage-workers must always be paid *weekly*, and not once in two months or once in a quarter as is often the case with agricultural labourers. It is very important for the workers to be paid regularly every week and, moreover, to be paid in cash, and not in goods. Employers are very fond of making the workers

accept all sorts of worthless goods at exorbitant prices in payment of wages; to put an end to this disgraceful practice the payment of wages in goods must be absolutely prohibited by law. Further, aged workers must receive state pensions. By their labour the workers maintain all the rich classes, and the whole state, and that gives them as much right to pensions as government officials, who get pensions. To prevent employers from taking advantage of their position to disregard regulations introduced to protect the workers, inspectors must be appointed to supervise, not only the factories, but also the big landlord farms and, in general, all enterprises where wage-labour is employed. But those inspectors must not be government officials, or be appointed by ministers or governors, or be in the service of the police. The inspectors must *be elected by the workers*; the state must pay salaries to persons who enjoy the confidence of the workers and whom they have freely elected. These elected deputies of the workers must also see to it that the workers' dwellings are kept in proper condition, that the employers dare not compel the workers to live in what is like pigsties or in mud huts (as is often the case with agricultural labourers), that the rules concerning the workers' rest are observed, and so on. It must not be forgotten, however, that no elected workers' deputies will be of any use as long as there is no political liberty, as long as the police are all-powerful, and are not responsible to the people. Everyone knows that at present the police will arrest without trial, not only workers' deputies but any worker who will dare speak in the name of all his fellow workers, expose breaches of the law, or call on the workers to unite. But when we have political liberty, the workers' deputies will be of very great use.

All employers (factory owners, landlords, contractors, and rich peasants) should *be absolutely forbidden* to make any arbitrary deductions from the wages of their

workers, for example, deductions for defective goods, deductions in the form of fines, etc. It is unlawful and tyrannical for employers *arbitrarily* to make deductions from workers' wages. The employer must not reduce a worker's wage by means of any deductions, or in any way whatsoever. The employer should not be allowed to pass and execute judgement (a fine sort of judge, who pockets the deductions from the worker's wages!); he should appeal to a *proper court*, and this court must consist of deputies elected by the workers and the employers in equal numbers. Only such a court will be able to judge fairly all the grievances of the employers against the workers and of the workers against the employers.

Such are the improvements the Social-Democrats are striving to obtain for the whole of the working class. The workers on every landed estate, on every farm, in the employ of every contractor, must meet and discuss with trustworthy persons what improvements they must strive to obtain and what demands they should advance (for the demands of the workers will, of course, be different at different factories, on different estates, and with different contractors).

All over Russia *Social-Democratic committees* are helping the workers to formulate their demands in a clear and precise way, and are helping them to issue printed leaflets where these demands are set out, so that they may be known to all workers, and to the employers and the authorities. When the workers unite as one man in support of their demands, the employers always have to give way and agree to them. In the towns the workers have already obtained many improvements in this way, and now handicraftsmen, artisans, and agricultural labourers are also beginning to unite (to organise) and fight for their demands. As long as we have no political liberty, we carry on the fight in secret, hiding from the police, who prohibit the publication of all leaflets and associations of workers. But when we have won political

liberty, we shall carry on the fight on a wider scale and openly, so that working people all over Russia may unite and defend themselves more vigorously from oppression. The larger the number of workers who unite *in the workers' Social-Democratic Party*, the stronger will they be, the sooner will they be able to achieve the complete emancipation of the working class from all oppression, from all wage-labour, from all toil for the benefit of the bourgeoisie.

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We have already said that the Social-Democratic Labour Party is striving to obtain improvements, not only for the workers, but also for *all the peasants*. Now let us see what improvements it is striving to obtain for all the peasants.

## 6. What Improvements Are the Social-Democrats Striving to Obtain for All the Peasants?

To secure the complete emancipation of all working people, the rural poor must, in alliance with the urban workers, wage a fight against the whole of the bourgeoisie, including the rich peasants. The rich peasants will strive to pay their farm labourers as little as possible and make them work as long and as hard as possible; but the workers in town and countryside will try to secure better wages, better conditions, and regular rest periods for farm labourers working for the rich peasants. That means that the rural poor must form their own unions apart from the rich peasants. We have already said this, and we shall always repeat it.

But in Russia, all peasants, rich and poor, are still

serfs in many respects; they are an *inferior*, "*black*", *tax-paying social-estate*; they are all serfs of the police officers and rural superintendents; very often they have to work for the landlord in payment for the use of the cut-off lands, watering places, pastures and meadows, just as they worked for the feudal lord under the serf-owning system. *All* the peasants want to be free of this new serfdom; *all* of them want to have full rights; *all* of them hate the landlords, who still compel them to *perform serf labour*, to pay "labour rent" for the use of the gentry's land and pastures, watering places and meadows, to work also "for damage" done by straying cattle and to send their womenfolk to reap the landlord's field merely "for the honour of it". All this labour rent for the landlord is a heavier burden for the poor peasants than for the rich peasants. The rich peasant is sometimes able to pay the landlord money in lieu of this work, but as a rule even the rich peasant is badly squeezed by the landlord. Hence, the rural poor must fight side by side with the rich peasants against their lack of rights, against every kind of serf labour, against every kind of labour rent. We shall be able to abolish *all* bondage, *all* poverty only when we defeat the bourgeoisie *as a whole* (including the rich peasants). But there are forms of bondage which we can abolish *before that time*, because even the rich peasant suffers badly from them. There are many localities and many districts in Russia where very often all the peasants are still quite like serfs. That is why all Russian workers and all the rural poor must *fight with both hands and on two sides*: with one hand—*fight against all the bourgeois*, in alliance with all the workers; and with the other hand—*fight against the rural officials, against the feudal landlords*, in alliance with all the peasants. If the rural poor do not form their own union separately from the rich peasants they will be deceived by the rich peasants, who will become landlords themselves, while the landless poor will not only

remain poor and without land but will not even be granted freedom to unite. If the rural poor do not fight side by side with the rich peasants against feudal bondage, they will remain fettered and tied down to one place, neither will they gain full freedom to unite with the urban workers.

The rural poor must first strike at the landlords and throw off at least the most vicious and most pernicious forms of feudal bondage; in this fight many of the rich peasants and adherents of the bourgeoisie will also take the side of the poor, because everybody is disgusted with the arrogance of the landlords. But as soon as we have curtailed the power of the landlords, the rich peasant will at once reveal his true character and stretch out greedy hands to grab everything; these are rapacious hands and they have already grabbed a great deal. Hence, we must be on our guard and form a strong, indestructible alliance with the urban workers. The urban workers will help to knock the old aristocratic habits out of the landlords and also tame the rich peasants a bit (as they have already somewhat tamed their own bosses, the factory owners). Without an alliance with the urban workers the rural poor will *never* rid themselves of all forms of bondage, want, and poverty; except for the urban workers, there is *no one* to help the rural poor, and they can count on no one but themselves. But there are improvements which we can obtain earlier, which we can obtain immediately, at the very outset of this great struggle. There are many forms of bondage in Russia which have long ceased to exist in other countries, and it is from this bondage imposed by the officials and landlords, this feudal bondage, that *the Russian peasantry as a whole* can free itself *immediately*.

Let us now see what improvements the workers' Social-Democratic Party is striving first of all to obtain so as to free the Russian peasantry as a whole from at least the most vicious forms of feudal bondage, and so as to untie

the hands of the rural poor for their struggle against the Russian bourgeoisie as a whole.

The first demand of the workers' Social-Democratic Party is the immediate abolition of all land redemption payments, all quit-rent, and all the dues imposed upon the "tax-paying" peasantry. When the committees of nobles and the Russian tsar's government, consisting of nobles, "emancipated" the peasants from serfdom, the peasants were compelled to *buy out their own land*, to buy out the land which they had tilled for generations! That was *robbery*. The committees of nobles, assisted by the tsarist government, simply *robbed* the peasants. The tsarist government sent troops to many places to impose the title-deeds upon the peasants *by force*, to take military punitive measures against the peasants, who were unwilling to accept the curtailed "pauper" allotments. Without the help of the troops, without brutality and shootings, the committees of nobles would never have been able to rob the peasants in the brazen way they did at the time of the emancipation from serfdom. The peasants must always remember how they were cheated and robbed by those committees of landowning nobles, because even today the tsarist government always appoints committees of nobles or officials whenever it is a question of passing new laws concerning the peasants. The tsar recently issued a manifesto (February 26, 1903), in which he promises to revise and improve the laws concerning the peasants. Who will do the revising? Who will do the improving? Again the nobility, again the officials! The peasants will always be defrauded until they secure the setting up of *peasant committees* for the purpose of improving their conditions of life. It is time to put a stop to the landlords, rural superintendents, and all kinds of officials lording it over the peasants! It is time to put a stop to this feudal dependence of the peasant upon every police officer, upon every drink-sodden scion of the nobility who is called a rural superinten-

dent, a police chief, or a governor! The peasants must demand freedom to manage their affairs *themselves*, freedom to consider, propose, and carry out new laws *themselves*. The peasants must demand the setting up of free, elected *peasant committees*, and until they obtain this they will always be defrauded and robbed by the nobility and the officials. No one will free the peasants from the official leeches, if they do not free themselves, if they do not unite and take their fate into *their own* hands.

The Social-Democrats not only demand the complete and immediate abolition of land redemption payments, quit-rent, and imposts of all kinds; they also demand that money taken from the people in the form of land redemption payments should be *restituted to the people*. Hundreds of millions of rubles have been paid up by peasants all over Russia since they were emancipated from serfdom by the committees of nobles. The peasants must demand that this money be returned to them. Let the government impose a special tax on the big landed nobility; let the land be taken from the monasteries and from the Department of Demesnes (i.e., from the tsar's family); let the national assembly of deputies use this money for the benefit of the peasants. Nowhere in the world is the peasant so downtrodden or so impoverished as he is in Russia. Nowhere do millions of peasants die so horribly of starvation as they do in Russia. The peasants in Russia have been reduced to dying of starvation because they were robbed long ago by the committees of nobles, and are being robbed to this day by being forced to pay tribute to the heirs of the feudal landlords every year in the form of redemption payments and quit-rent. The robbers must be made to answer for their crimes! Let money be taken away from the big landed nobility so as to provide effective relief for the famine-stricken. The starving peasant does not need charity, he does not need paltry doles; he must demand the return of the money he has paid for years and years to the landlords and to the state.

The national assembly of deputies and the peasant committees will then be able to give real and effective assistance to the starving.

Further. The Social-Democratic Labour Party demands the immediate abolition of collective liability and of *all laws restricting the peasant in the free disposal of his land*. The tsar's Manifesto of February 26, 1903 promises the abolition of collective liability. A law to this effect has already been passed. But this is not enough. *All laws* that prevent the peasant from freely disposing of his land must be abolished immediately; otherwise, even without collective liability the peasant will not be quite free and will remain a semi-serf. The peasant must *be quite free* to dispose of his land: to let or sell it to whomsoever he pleases, without having to ask for permission from anyone. That is what the tsar's ukase does not permit: the gentry, the merchants, and the townspeople are free to dispose of their land, but the peasant is not. The peasant is a little child, who must have a rural superintendent to look after him like a nurse. The peasant must not be allowed to sell his allotment, for he will squander the money! That is how the feudal die-hards argue, and there are simpletons who believe them and, wishing the peasant well, say that he must not be allowed to sell his land. Even the Narodniks (of whom we have already spoken) and the people who call themselves "Socialist-Revolutionaries" also yield to this argument and agree that it is better for the peasant to remain somewhat of a serf rather than be allowed to sell his land.

The Social-Democrats say: that is sheer hypocrisy, aristocratic talk, merely honeyed words! When we have attained socialism, and the working class has defeated the bourgeoisie, the land will be owned in common and *nobody* will have the right to sell land. But what in the meantime? Are the nobleman and the merchant to be allowed to sell their land, while the peasant is not!? Are the nobleman and the merchant to be free while the

peasant remains a semi-serf!? Is the peasant to continue to have to beg permission from the authorities!?

All this is mere deceit, though covered up with honeyed words, but it is deceit for all that.

As long as the nobleman and the merchant are allowed to sell land, the peasant must also have *full right* to sell his land and to dispose of it with *complete freedom*, in exactly the same way as the nobleman and the merchant.

When the working class has defeated the entire bourgeoisie, it will take the land away from the big proprietors and introduce *co-operative farming* on the big estates, so that the workers will farm the land together, in common, and freely elect delegates to manage the farms. They will have all kinds of labour-saving machines, and work in shifts for not more than eight (or even six) hours a day. The small peasant who prefers to carry on his farm in the old way on individual lines will not then produce for the market, to sell to the first comer, but for the workers' co-operatives; the small peasant will supply the workers' co-operatives with grain, meat, vegetables, and the workers in return will provide him free of charge with machines, livestock, fertilisers, clothes, and whatever else he needs. There will then be no struggle for money between the big and the small farmer; there will then be no working for hire for others; all workers will work for themselves, all improvements in methods of production and all machines will benefit the workers themselves and help to make their work easier, improve their standard of living.

But every sensible man understands that socialism cannot be attained at once: to attain it a fierce struggle must be waged against the entire bourgeoisie and all governments; all urban workers all over Russia must unite in a firm and unbreakable alliance with all the rural poor. That is a great cause, and to that cause it is worth devoting one's whole life. But until we have attained socialism, the big owner will always fight the small owner for

money. Is the big landowner to be free to sell his land, while the small peasant is not? We repeat: the peasants are not little children and will not allow anyone to lord it over them; the peasants must receive, without any restriction, *all the rights* enjoyed by the nobility and the merchants.

It is also said: the peasant's land is not his own, but communal land. Everyone cannot be allowed to sell communal land. This, too, is a deception. Have not the nobles and the merchants their associations too? Do not the nobles and the merchants combine to float companies for the joint purchase of land, factories, or any other thing? Why then are no restrictions invented for the associations of the nobility, while the police scoundrels zealously think up restrictions and prohibitions for the peasantry? The peasants have never received anything good from the officials, except beatings, extortions, and bullying. The peasants will never receive anything good until they take their affairs into their own hands, until they obtain complete equality of rights and complete liberty. If the peasants want their land to be communal, no one will dare to interfere with them; and they will voluntarily form an association which will include whomsoever they like, and on whatever terms they like; they will quite freely draw up a communal contract in whatever form they like. And let no official dare poke his nose into the communal affairs of the peasants. Let no one dare exercise his wits on the peasants and invent restrictions and prohibitions for them.

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Lastly, there is another important improvement which the Social-Democrats are striving to obtain for the peasants. They want immediately to impose limits on the peasants' bondage to the nobility, their serf bondage. Of course bondage cannot be completely abolished as long as poverty exists, and poverty cannot be abolished as long

as the land and the factories are in the hands of the bourgeoisie, as long as money is the principal power in the world, and until a *socialist society* has been established. But in the Russian countryside there is still much bondage of a particularly vicious sort which does not exist in other countries, although socialism has not yet been established there. There is still much *serf bondage* in Russia which is profitable to all the landlords, weighs heavily on all the peasants, and can and must be abolished immediately, in the first place.

Let us explain the sort of bondage we call serf bondage.

Everyone who lives in the country knows cases like the following. The landlord's land adjoins the peasant's land. At the time of the emancipation the peasants were deprived of land that was indispensable to them: pasture, woodland, and watering places were cut off. The peasants cannot do without this cut-off land, without pastures and watering places. Whether they like it or not the peasants are forced to go to the landlord to ask him to let their cattle go to the water, to graze on the pastures, and so forth. The landlord does not farm any land himself and, perhaps, has no money; he lives only by keeping the peasants in thrall. In return for the use of the cut-off lands the peasants work for him for nothing; they plough his land with their horses, harvest his grain and mow his hay, thresh his grain, and in some places even have to cart their manure to the landlord's fields, or bring him homespun cloth, and eggs and poultry. Just as under serfdom! Under serfdom the peasants had to work for nothing for the landlord on whose estate they lived, and today they very often have to work for nothing for the landlord in return for the very same land which the committees of nobles filched from them at the time of the emancipation. It is just the same as the *corvée* system. In some gubernias the peasants themselves call this system *barshchina*, or *panshchina*. Well, that is what we call serf bondage. At the time of the emancipation from serfdom



the committees of landowning nobles deliberately arranged matters in such a way as to keep the peasants in bondage in the old way. They would deliberately dock the peasants' allotments; they would drive a wedge of the landlord's land in between peasants' holdings so as to make it impossible for the peasant even to let his poultry out without trespassing; they would deliberately transfer the peasants to inferior land, deliberately block the way to the watering place by a strip of landlord's land—in short, they arranged matters in such a way that the peasants should find themselves in a trap, and, just as before, could easily be taken captive. There are still countless numbers of villages where the peasants are in captivity to nearby landlords, just as much as they were under serfdom. In villages like these, both the rich peasant and the poor peasant are bound hand and foot and at the mercy of the landlords. The poor peasant fares even worse than the rich peasant from this state of affairs. The rich peasant sometimes owns some land and sends his labourer to work for the landlord instead of going himself, but the poor peasant has no way out, and the landlord does what he likes to him. Under this bondage the poor peasant often has not even a moment's breathing-space; he cannot go to look for work elsewhere because of the work he has to do for his landlord; he cannot even think of freely uniting in one union, in one party, with all the rural poor and the urban workers.

Well then, are there no means by which it would be possible to abolish this sort of bondage at once, forthwith, immediately? The Social-Democratic Labour Party proposes to the peasants *two* means to this end. But we must repeat that only socialism can deliver all the poor from bondage of every kind, for as long as the rich have power they will always oppress the poor in one way or another. It is impossible to abolish all bondage at once, but it is possible greatly to restrict the most vicious, the most revolting form of bondage, serf bondage, which

weighs heavily on the poor, on the middle and even on the rich peasants; it is possible to obtain immediate relief for the peasants.

There are two means to this end.

First means: freely elected courts consisting of delegates of the farm labourers and poor peasants, as well as of the rich peasants and landlords.

Second means: freely elected *peasant committees*. These peasant committees must have the right, not only to discuss and adopt all kinds of measures for abolishing the corvée, for abolishing the remnants of serfdom, but they must also have the right to *expropriate the cut-off lands and restore them to the peasants*.

Let us consider these two means a little more closely. The freely elected delegate courts will consider all cases arising out of complaints of peasants against bondage. Such courts will have the right to reduce rents for land if the landlord, taking advantage of the peasants' poverty, has fixed them too high. Such courts will have the right to free the peasants from exorbitant payments; when a landlord engages a peasant in the winter for summer work at an excessively low wage, the court will judge the case and fix a fair wage. Of course, such courts must not consist of officials, but of freely elected delegates, and the agricultural labourers and the rural poor must also without fail elect their delegates, whose number must not in any case be less than those elected by the rich peasants and the landlords. Such courts will also try disputes between labourers and employers. When such courts exist it will be easier for the labourers and all the rural poor to defend their rights, to unite and to find out exactly what people can be trusted to stand up faithfully for the poor and for the labourers.

The other means is still more important: the establishment of free *peasant committees* consisting of elected delegates of the farm labourers and poor, middle and rich peasants in every uyezd (or, if the peasants think



fit, they may elect several committees in each uyezd; perhaps they will even prefer to establish peasant committees in every volost and in every large village). No one knows better than the peasants themselves what bondage oppresses them. No one will be able to expose the landlords, who to this day live by keeping the peasants in thrall, better than the peasants themselves. The peasant committees will decide what cut-off lands, what meadows, pastures, and so forth, were taken from the peasants unfairly; they will decide whether those lands shall be expropriated without compensation, or whether those who bought such lands should be paid compensation at the expense of the high nobility. The peasant committees will at least release the peasants from the traps into which they were driven by very many committees of the landowning nobles. The peasant committees will rid the peasants of interference by officials; they will show that the peasants themselves want to, and can, manage their own affairs; they will help the peasants to reach agreement among themselves about their needs and to recognise those who are really able to stand up for the rural poor and for an alliance with the urban workers. The peasant committees will be the *first step* towards enabling the peasants even in remote villages to get on to their feet and to take their fate into their own hands.

That is why the Social-Democratic workers warn the peasants:

*Place no faith in any committees of nobles, or in any commissions consisting of officials.*

*Demand a national assembly of deputies.*

*Demand the establishment of peasant committees.*

*Demand complete freedom to publish pamphlets and newspapers of every kind.*

When all have the right freely and fearlessly to express their opinions and their wishes in the national assembly of deputies, in the peasant committees, and in the newspapers, it will very soon be seen who is on the side of the

working class and who is on the side of the bourgeoisie. Today, the great majority of the people do not think about these things at all; some conceal their real views, some do not yet know their own minds, and some lie deliberately. But when this right has been won, everyone will begin to think about these things; there will be no reason for concealing anything, and everything will soon become clear. We have already said that the bourgeoisie will draw the rich peasants to its side. The sooner and the more completely we succeed in abolishing serf bondage, and the more real freedom the peasants obtain for themselves, the sooner will the rural poor unite among themselves, and the sooner will the rich peasants unite with all the bourgeoisie. Let them unite: we are not afraid of that, although we know perfectly well that this will strengthen the rich peasants. But we, too, will unite, and *our union*, the union between the rural poor and the urban workers, will embrace far more people. It will be a union of tens of millions against a union of hundreds of thousands. We also know that the bourgeoisie will try (it is already trying!) to attract the middle and even the small peasants to its side; it will try to deceive them, entice them, sow dissension among them, and promise to raise each of them into the ranks of the rich. We have already seen the means and the deceit the bourgeoisie resort to in order to lure the middle peasant. We must therefore open the eyes of the rural poor beforehand, and consolidate in advance their separate union with the urban workers against the entire bourgeoisie.

Let every villager look around carefully. How often we hear the rich peasants talking against the nobility, against the landlords! How they complain of the oppression the people suffer from! Or of the landlords' land lying idle! How they love to talk (in private conversation) about what a good thing it would be if the peasants took possession of the land!

Can we believe what the rich peasants say? No. They

do not want the land for the people; they want it for themselves. They have already got hold of a great deal of land, bought outright or rented, and still they are not satisfied. *Hence, the rural poor will not long have to march side by side with the rich peasants against the landlords.* Only the first step will have to be taken in their company, and after that their ways will part.

*That is why we must draw a clear distinction between this first step and subsequent steps, and our final and most important step.* The first step in the countryside will be the complete emancipation of the peasant, full rights for the peasant, and the establishment of peasant committees for the purpose of restoring the cut-off lands. But our final step will be the same in both town and country: *we shall take all the land and all the factories from the landlords and the bourgeoisie and set up a socialist society.* We shall have to go through a big struggle in the period between our first step and the final, *and whoever confuses the first step with the final weakens that struggle and unwittingly helps to hoodwink the rural poor.*

The rural poor will take the first step together with all the peasants: a few kulaks may fall out, perhaps one peasant in a hundred is willing to put up with any kind of bondage. But the overwhelming mass of the peasants will, as yet, advance as one whole: all the peasants want equal rights. Bondage to the landlords ties everyone hand and foot. But the final step will never be taken by all the peasants together: then, all the rich peasants will turn against the farm labourers. Then, it is a strong union of the rural poor and the *urban Social-Democratic workers* that we need. Whoever tells the peasants that they can take the first and the final step simultaneously is deceiving them. He forgets about the great struggle that is going on among the peasants themselves, the great struggle between the rural poor and the rich peasants.

That is why the Social-Democrats do not promise the peasants *immediately* a land flowing with milk and honey.

That is why the Social-Democrats first of all demand complete freedom for the struggle, for the great, nationwide struggle of the entire working class against the entire bourgeoisie. That is why the Social-Democrats advise a *small but sure first step.*

Some people think that our demand for the establishment of peasant committees for the purpose of restricting bondage and of restoring the cut-off lands is a sort of fence or barrier, as if we meant to say: stop, not a step farther! These people have given insufficient thought to what the Social-Democrats want. The demand for peasant committees to be set up for the purpose of restricting bondage and of restoring the cut-off lands is not a barrier. It is a *door*. We must first pass through this door *in order to go farther*, to march along the wide and open road *to the very end*, to the complete emancipation of all working people in Russia. Until the peasants pass through this door they will remain in ignorance and bondage, without full rights, without complete and real liberty; they will not even be able to decide definitely among themselves who is the friend of the working man and who his enemy. That is why the Social-Democrats point to this door and say that the entire people must all together first force this door and smash it in. But there are people who call themselves Narodniks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, who also wish the peasant well, shout and make a noise, wave their arms about and want to help him, but *they do not see that door!* Those people are so blind that they even say: there is no need at all to give the peasant the right freely to dispose of his land! They wish the peasant well, but sometimes they argue exactly like the feudal diehards! Such friends can be of little help. What is the use of wishing the peasant all the best if you don't clearly see the very first door that must be smashed? What is the use of wanting socialism if you don't see how to enter on the road of a free, people's struggle for socialism, not only in the towns, but also in the countryside, not only against

the landlords, but also *against the rich peasants in the village commune, the "mir"?*

That is why the Social-Democrats point so insistently to this first and nearest door. The difficult thing at this stage is not to express a lot of good wishes, but to point to the right road, to understand clearly *how the very first step should be taken*. All friends of the peasant have been talking and writing for the past forty years about the Russian peasant being crushed by bondage and about his remaining a semi-serf. Long before there were any Social-Democrats in Russia, the friends of the peasant wrote many books describing how shamefully the landlords robbed and enslaved the peasant by means of various cut-off lands. All honest people now realise that the peasant must be given assistance at once, immediately, that he must get at least some relief from this bondage; even officials in our police government are beginning to talk about this. The whole question is: *how to set about it, how to take the first step*, which door must be forced first?

To this question different people (among those who wish the peasant well) give two different answers. Every rural proletarian must try to understand these two answers as clearly as possible and form a definite and firm opinion about them. One answer is given by the Narodniks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries. The first thing to be done, they say, is to develop all sorts of societies (co-operatives) among the peasants. The unity of the *mir* must be strengthened. Every peasant should not be given the right to dispose of his land freely. Let the rights of the commune, the *mir*, be extended, and let all the land in Russia gradually become communal land. The peasants must be granted every assistance to purchase land, so that the land may more easily pass from capital to labour.

The other answer is given by the Social-Democrats. The peasant must first of all obtain for himself all the rights possessed by the nobility and the merchants, all without exception. The peasant must have full right to dispose

freely of his land. In order to abolish the most revolting forms of bondage, peasant committees must be set up for the purpose of restoring the cut-off lands. We need not the unity of the *mir*, but unity of the rural poor in the different village communes all over Russia, unity of the rural proletarians with the urban proletarians. All sorts of societies (co-operatives) and the communal purchase of land will always benefit the rich peasants most, and will always serve to hoodwink the middle peasants.

The Russian Government realises that some relief must be given to the peasants, but it wants to make shift with trifles; it wants everything to be done by the officials. The peasants must be on the alert, because commissions of officials will cheat them just as they were cheated by the committees of nobles. The peasants must demand the election of free peasant committees. The important thing is not to expect improvement from the officials, but for the peasants to take their fate into their own hands. Let us at first take only one step, at first abolish only the vicious forms of bondage—so that the peasants should become conscious of their strength, so that they should freely reach a common agreement and unite! No honest person can deny that the cut-off lands often serve as the instruments of the most outrageous serf bondage. No honest person can deny that our demand is the primary and fairest of demands: let the peasants freely elect *their own* committees, without the officials, for the purpose of abolishing all serf bondage.

In the free peasant committees (just as in the free all-Russia assembly of deputies) the Social-Democrats will at once do all in their power to consolidate a distinct union of the rural proletarians with the urban proletarians. The Social-Democrats will make a stand for all measures for the benefit of the rural proletarians and will help them to follow up the first step, as quickly as possible and as unitedly as possible, with the second and the third step, and so on to the very end, to the complete *victory of the*

*proletariat*. But can we say today, at once, what demand will be appropriate tomorrow for the second step? No, we cannot, because we do not know what stand will be taken tomorrow by the rich peasants, and by many educated people who are concerned with all kinds of co-operatives and with the land passing from capital to labour.

Perhaps they will not yet succeed in reaching an understanding with the landlords on the morrow; perhaps they will want to put an end to landlord rule completely. Very good! The Social-Democrats would very much like this to happen, and they will advise rural and urban proletarians to demand that all the land be taken from the landlords and transferred to the free people's state. The Social-Democrats will vigilantly see to it that the rural proletarians are not cheated in the course of this, and that they still further consolidate their forces for the final struggle for the complete emancipation of the proletariat.

But things may turn out quite differently. In fact, it is more likely that they will turn out differently. On the very day after the worst forms of bondage have been restricted and curtailed, the rich peasants and many educated people may unite with the landlords, and then the entire rural bourgeoisie will rise against the entire rural proletariat. In that event it would be ridiculous for us to fight only the landlords. We would then have to fight the entire bourgeoisie and demand first of all the greatest possible freedom and elbow-room for this fight, demand better conditions of life for the workers in order to facilitate this struggle.

In any case, whichever way things turn out, our first, our principal and indispensable task is *to strengthen the alliance of the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians with the urban proletarians*. For this alliance we need at once, immediately, *complete political liberty for the people, complete equality of rights for the peasants and the abolition of serf bondage*. And when that alliance is

established and strengthened, we shall easily expose all the deceit the bourgeoisie resorts to in order to attract the middle peasant; we shall easily and quickly take the second, the third and the last step against the entire bourgeoisie, against all the government forces, and we shall unswervingly march to victory and rapidly achieve the *complete emancipation of all working people*.

## 7. The Class Struggle in the Countryside

What is the *class struggle*? It is a struggle of one part of the people against the other; a struggle waged by the masses of those who have no rights, are oppressed and engage in toil, against the privileged, the oppressors and drones; a struggle of the wage-labourers, or proletarians, against the property-owners, or bourgeoisie. This great struggle has always gone on and is now going on in the Russian countryside too, although not everyone sees it, and although not everyone understands its significance. In the period of serfdom the entire mass of the peasants fought against their oppressors, the landlord class, which was protected, defended, and supported by the tsarist government. The peasants were then unable to unite and were utterly crushed by ignorance; they had no helpers and brothers among the urban workers; nevertheless they fought as best they could. They were not deterred by the brutal persecution of the government, were not daunted by punitive measures and bullets, and did not believe the priests, who tried with all their might to prove that serfdom was approved by Holy Scripture and sanctioned by God (that is what Metropolitan Philaret actually said!); the peasants rose in rebellion, now in one place and now in another, and at last the government yielded, fearing a general uprising of all the peasants.

Serfdom was abolished, but not altogether. The peasants remained without rights, remained an inferior, tax-paying, "black" social-estate, remained in the clutches of

serf bondage. Unrest among the peasants continues; they continue to seek complete, real freedom. Meanwhile, after the abolition of serfdom, a new class struggle arose, the *struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie*. Wealth increased, railways and big factories were built, the towns grew still more populous and more luxurious, but all this wealth was appropriated by a very few, while the people became poorer all the time, became ruined, starved, and had to leave their homes to go and hire themselves out for wages. The urban workers started a great, new struggle of all the poor against all the rich. The urban workers have united in the *Social-Democratic Party* and are waging their struggle stubbornly, staunchly, and solidly, advancing step by step, preparing for the great final struggle, and demanding political liberty for all the people.

At last the peasants, too, lost patience. In the spring of last year, 1902, the peasants of Poltava, Kharkov, and other gubernias rose against the landlords, broke open their barns, shared the contents among themselves, distributed among the starving the grain that had been sown and reaped by the peasants but appropriated by the landlords, and demanded a new division of the land. The peasants could no longer bear the endless oppression, and began to seek a better lot. The peasants decided—and quite rightly so—that it was better to die fighting the oppressors than to die of starvation without a struggle. But they did not win a better lot for themselves. The tsarist government proclaimed them common rioters and robbers (for having taken from the robber landlords grain which the peasants themselves had sown and reaped!); the tsarist government sent troops against them as against an enemy, and the peasants were defeated; peasants were shot down, many were killed; peasants were brutally flogged, many were flogged to death; they were tortured worse than the Turks torture their enemies, the Christians. The tsar's envoys, the governors, were the worst torturers,

real executioners. The soldiers raped the wives and daughters of the peasants. And after all this, the peasants were tried by a court of officials, were compelled to pay the landlords 800,000 rubles, and at the trials, those infamous secret trials, trials in a torture chamber, counsels for the defence were not even allowed to tell how the peasants had been ill-treated and tortured by the tsar's envoys, Governor Obolensky, and the other servants of the tsar.

The peasants fought in a just cause. The Russian working class will always honour the memory of the martyrs who were shot down and flogged to death by the tsar's servants. Those martyrs fought for the freedom and happiness of the working people. The peasants were defeated, but they will rise again and again, and will not lose heart because of this first defeat. The class-conscious workers will do all in their power to inform the largest possible number of working people in town and country about the peasants' struggle and to help them prepare for another and more successful struggle. The class-conscious workers will do all in their power to help the peasants *clearly to understand why the first peasant uprising (1902) was crushed and what must be done in order to secure victory for the peasants and workers and not for the tsar's servants*.

The peasant uprising was crushed because it was an uprising of an ignorant and politically unconscious mass, an uprising without clear and definite *political* demands, i.e., without the demand for a change in the *political* order. The peasant uprising was crushed because *no preparations had been made* for it. The peasant uprising was crushed because the rural proletarians had not yet allied themselves with the urban proletarians. Such were the three causes of the peasants' first failure. To be successful an insurrection must have a conscious political aim; preparations must be made for it in advance; it must spread throughout the whole of Russia and be in alliance with the urban workers. And every step in the struggle of the

urban workers, every Social-Democratic pamphlet or newspaper, every speech made by a class-conscious worker to the rural proletarians will bring nearer the time when the insurrection will be repeated and end in victory.

The peasants rose without a conscious political aim, simply because they could not bear their sufferings any longer, because they did not want to die like dumb brutes, without resistance. The peasants had suffered so much from every manner of robbery, oppression, and torment that they could not but believe, if only for a moment, the vague rumours about the tsar's mercy; they could not but believe that every sensible man would regard it as just that grain should be distributed among starving people, among those who had worked all their lives for others, had sown and reaped, and were now dying of starvation, while the "gentry's" barns were full to bursting. The peasants seemed to have forgotten that the best land and all the factorics had been seized by the rich, by the landlords and the bourgeoisie, precisely for the purpose of compelling the starving people to work for them. The peasants forgot that not only do the priests preach sermons in defense of the rich class, but the entire tsarist government, with its host of bureaucrats and soldiers, rises in its defence. The tsarist government reminded the peasants of that. With brutal cruelty, the tsarist government showed the peasants what state power is, whose servant and whose protector it is. We need only remind the peasants of this lesson more often, and they will easily understand why it is necessary to *change the political order*, and why we need *political liberty*. Peasant uprisings will have a conscious political aim when that is understood by larger and larger numbers of people, when every peasant who can read and write and who thinks for himself becomes familiar with the *three principal demands* which must be fought for first of all. The first demand—the convocation of a *national assembly of deputies for the purpose of establishing popular elective government in Russia in*

*place of the autocratic government.* The second demand—*freedom for all to publish all kinds of books and newspapers.* The third demand—*recognition by law of the peasants' complete equality of rights with the other social-estates, and the institution of elected peasant committees with the primary object of abolishing all forms of serf bondage.* Such are the chief and fundamental demands of the Social-Democrats, and it will now be very easy for the peasants to understand them, to understand *what to begin with* in the struggle for the people's freedom. When the peasants understand these demands, they will also understand that long, persistent and persevering *preparations* must be made in advance for the struggle, not in isolation, but together with the workers in the towns—the Social-Democrats.

Let every class-conscious worker and peasant rally around himself the most intelligent, reliable, and fearless comrades. Let him strive to explain to them what the Social-Democrats want, so that every one of them may understand the struggle that must be waged and the demands that must be advanced. Let the class-conscious Social-Democrats begin gradually, cautiously, but unswervingly, to teach the peasants the doctrine of Social-Democracy, give them Social-Democratic pamphlets to read, and explain those pamphlets at small gatherings of trustworthy people.

But the doctrine of Social-Democracy must not be taught from books alone; every instance, every case of oppression and injustice we see around us must be used for this purpose. The Social-Democratic doctrine is one of struggle against all oppression, all robbery, all injustice. Only he who knows the causes of oppression and who *all his life fights every case of oppression* is a real Social-Democrat. How can this be done? When they gather in their town or village, class-conscious Social-Democrats must themselves decide how it must be done to the best advantage of the entire working class. To show how it

must be done I shall cite one or two examples. Let us suppose that a Social-Democratic worker has come on a visit to his village, or that some urban Social-Democratic worker has come to any village. The entire village is in the clutches of the neighbouring landlord, like a fly in a spider's web; it has always been in this state of bondage and cannot escape from it. The worker must at once pick out the most sensible, intelligent, and trustworthy peasants, those who are seeking justice and will not be frightened by the first police agent who comes along, and explain to them the causes of this hopeless bondage, tell them how the landlords cheated the peasants and robbed them with the aid of the committees of nobles, tell them how strong the rich are and how they are supported by the tsarist government, and also tell them about the demands of the Social-Democratic workers. When the peasants understand all these simple things they must all put their heads together and discuss whether it is possible to put up united resistance to the landlord, whether it is possible to put forward the first and principal demands (in the same way as the urban workers present their demands to the factory owners). If the landlord holds one big village, or several villages, in bondage, the best thing would be to obtain, through trustworthy people, a *leaflet* from the nearest Social-Democratic committee. In the leaflet the Social-Democratic committee will correctly describe, from the very beginning, the bondage the peasants suffer from and formulate their most immediate demands (reduction of rent paid for land, proper rates, and not half-rates, of pay for winter hire,<sup>16</sup> or less persecution for damage done by straying cattle or various other demands). From such a leaflet all peasants who can read and write will get to know very well what the issue is, and those who cannot read will have it explained to them. The peasants will then clearly see that the Social-Democrats support them, that the Social-Democrats condemn all robbery. The peasants will then begin to understand what relief, if only

slight, but relief for all that, can be obtained now, at once, if all stand together, and what big improvements for the whole country they must seek to obtain by a great struggle in conjunction with the Social-Democratic workers in the towns. The peasants will then prepare more and more for that great struggle; they will learn how to find trustworthy people and how to stand unitedly for their demands. Perhaps they may sometimes succeed in organising a strike, as the urban workers do. True, this is more difficult in the countryside than in the towns, but it is sometimes possible for all that; in other countries there have been successful strikes, for instance, in the busy seasons, when the landlords and rich farmers are badly in need of hands. If the rural poor are prepared to strike, if an agreement has long been reached about the general demands, if those demands have been explained in leaflets, or properly explained at meetings, all will stand together, and the landlord will have to yield, or at least put some curb on his greed. If the strike is unanimous and is called during the busy season, the landlord, and even the authorities with their troops, will find it hard to do anything—time will be lost, the landlord will be threatened with ruin, and he will soon become more tractable. Of course, strikes are a new thing, and new things do not come off well at first. The urban workers, too, did not know how to fight unitedly at first; they did not know what demands to put forward in common; they simply went out to smash machinery and wreck a factory. But now the workers have learned to conduct a united struggle. Every new job must first be learned. The workers now understand that immediate relief can be obtained only if they stand together; meanwhile, the people are getting used to offering united resistance and are preparing more and more for the great and decisive struggle. Similarly, the peasants will learn to stand up to the worst robbers, to be united in their demands for some measure of relief and to prepare gradually, persistently,



and everywhere for the great battle for freedom. The number of class-conscious workers and peasants will constantly grow, and the unions of rural Social-Democrats will become stronger and stronger; every case of bondage to the landlord, of extortion by the priest, of police brutality and bureaucratic oppression, will increasingly serve to open the eyes of the people, accustom them to putting up united resistance and to the idea that it is necessary to change the political order by force.

At the very beginning of this pamphlet we said that at the present time the urban workers come out into the streets and squares and publicly demand *freedom*, that they inscribe on their banners and cry out: "Down with the autocracy!" The day will soon come when the urban workers will rise not merely to march shouting through the streets, but for the great and final struggle; when the workers will declare as one man: "We shall win freedom, or die in the fight!"; when the places of the hundreds who have been killed, fallen in the fight will be taken by thousands of fresh and still more resolute fighters. And the peasants, too, will then rise all over Russia and go to the aid of the urban workers, will fight to the end for the freedom of the workers and peasants. The tsar's hordes will be unable to withstand that onslaught. Victory will go to the working people, and the working class will march along the wide, spacious road to the liberation of all working people from any kind of oppression. The working class will use its freedom to fight for socialism!

**The Programme  
of the Russian Social-Democratic  
Labour Party Proposed  
by the Newspaper "ISKRA"<sup>17</sup>  
in Conjunction with the Magazine "ZARYA"**

We have already explained what a programme is, why one is needed, and why the Social-Democratic Party is the only party that comes out with a clear and definite

programme. A programme can be finally adopted only by the congress of our Party, i.e., the assembly of representatives of all Party workers. Preparations for such a congress are now being made by the Organising Committee. But very many committees of our Party have already openly declared their agreement with *Iskra*, and their recognition of *Iskra* as the leading newspaper. Therefore, prior to the congress our draft (proposed) programme can fully serve as a precise indication of what the Social-Democrats want, and we consider it necessary to give that draft in full as an appendix to our pamphlet.

Of course, without an explanation not every worker will understand everything that is said in the programme. Many great socialists worked to create the doctrine of Social-Democracy, which was completed by Marx and Engels; the workers of all countries went through a great deal to acquire the experience that we want to utilise and make the basis of our programme. Therefore the workers must learn the teachings of Social-Democracy in order to understand every word of the programme, *their* programme, *their* banner of the struggle. And the workers are learning and understanding the Social-Democratic programme with particular ease because that programme speaks of what every thinking worker has seen and experienced. Let nobody be deterred by the "difficulty" of understanding the programme all at once: the more every worker reads and thinks, the more experience he acquires in the struggle, the more fully will he understand it. But let everybody think over and discuss the *whole* programme of the Social-Democrats; let everybody constantly keep in mind *all that the Social-Democrats want, and what they think about the emancipation* of all working people. The Social-Democrats want everybody to know clearly and precisely the truth, the whole truth, about what the Social-Democratic Party is.



We cannot here explain the whole programme in detail. A separate pamphlet would be needed for that. We shall merely indicate briefly what the programme says, and advise the reader to get hold of two pamphlets to use as aids. One pamphlet is by the German Social-Democrat Karl Kautsky, and its title is *The Erfurt Programme*. It has been translated into Russian. The other pamphlet is by the Russian Social-Democrat L. Martov, and its title is *The Workers' Cause in Russia*. These pamphlets will help the reader to understand the whole of our programme.

Let us now indicate each part of our programme by a separate letter (see the programme below) and show what is spoken about in each part.

A) At the very beginning it says that the proletariat all over the world is fighting for its emancipation, and the Russian proletariat is only a detachment in the world army of the working class of all countries.

B) It then goes on to explain the bourgeois order of things in nearly all countries in the world, including Russia: how the majority of the population, working for the landowners and capitalists, live in poverty and want; how the small artisans and peasants are being ruined while the big factories grow bigger; how capital crushes the worker and also his wife and children; how the conditions of the working class are growing worse and worse and unemployment and want are increasing.

C) It then speaks of the union of the workers, of their struggle, of the great aim of that struggle: to liberate all the oppressed and completely abolish all oppression of the poor by the rich. This part also explains why the working class is growing stronger and stronger, and why it will certainly defeat all its enemies, all those who defend the bourgeoisie.

D) Then it explains why Social-Democratic parties have been formed in all countries, how they help the working class to wage its struggle, unite and guide the

workers, enlighten them, and prepare them for the great struggle.

E) Further, it explains why the conditions of the people in Russia are even worse than in other countries, what a great evil the tsarist autocracy is, and why we must first of all overthrow that autocracy and establish popular, elective government in Russia.

F) What improvements must elective government bring the whole people? We explain that in our pamphlet, and it is also explained in the programme.

G) Then the programme indicates what improvements for the whole of the working class we must strive to immediately achieve in order to make life easier for it and enable it to fight more freely for socialism.

H) Special reference is made in the programme to those improvements which we must first of all strive to achieve for all the peasants so as to enable the rural poor to wage the class struggle more easily and freely against both the rural bourgeoisie and the entire Russian bourgeoisie.

I) Lastly, the Social-Democratic Party warns the people not to believe any police or bureaucratic promises or honeyed words, but to fight firmly for the immediate convocation of a free national assembly of deputies.

Written in March 1903

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*Collected Works,*  
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## Report on the Resolution on the Support of the Peasant Movement

Delivered at the Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.

April 19 (May 2), 1905

In view of the statement of seventeen comrades calling attention to the urgent need for speeding up the work of the Congress,<sup>18</sup> I shall try to be as brief as possible. Strictly speaking, there are no moot points of principle in the question under discussion; none arose even during the Party crisis, which was rich in differences on points of "principle".

Moreover, the draft resolution was published in *Uperyod*<sup>19</sup> quite some time ago; I shall therefore confine myself merely to supporting the resolution.

The question of supporting the peasant movement divides itself into two aspects: (1) fundamentals, and (2) the practical experience of the Party. The latter will be dealt with by our second reporter, Comrade Barsov, who is thoroughly familiar with our most advanced peasant movement—that in Guria. As regards the fundamentals involved, it is now a matter of reaffirming the slogans elaborated by Social-Democracy and adapting them to the peasant movement of today. This movement is growing and spreading before our eyes. The government is up to its old game of trying to fool the peasantry with sham concessions. This policy of corruption must be countered with the slogans of our Party.

These slogans, in my opinion, are set forth in the following draft resolution:

"The Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, as the party of the class-conscious proletariat, strives to bring about the complete emancipation of all working people from every kind of exploitation, and supports every revolutionary movement against the present social and political system. Therefore, the R.S.D.L.P. strongly supports the present-day peasant movement, among others, and stands for all revolutionary measures capable of improving the condition of the peasantry, not halting at the expropriation of the landed estates to this end. At the same time, as the class party of the proletariat, the R.S.D.L.P. works undeviatingly towards an independent class organisation of the rural proletarians, ever mindful of its obligation to make clear to them the antagonism of their interests to those of the peasant bourgeoisie, to bring them to understand that only the common struggle of the rural and the urban proletariat against the whole of bourgeois society can lead to the socialist revolution, which alone is capable of really freeing the mass of the rural poor from poverty and exploitation.

"As a practical slogan for agitation among the peasantry, and as a means of instilling the utmost political consciousness into this movement, the R.S.D.L.P. proposes the immediate formation of revolutionary peasant committees for all-round support of all democratic reforms and for their implementation in detail. In these committees as well the R.S.D.L.P. will strive for an independent organisation of the rural proletarians for the purpose of supporting the entire peasantry in all its revolutionary-democratic actions, on the one hand, and, on the other, of safeguarding the true interests of the rural proletariat in its struggle against the peasant bourgeoisie" (*Uperyod*, No. 11).

This draft was discussed by the Agrarian Committee, which the delegates had appointed in advance of the Congress for its preparation. Although opinion was considerably divided, certain major trends were clearly in

evidence, and it is with these that I intend to deal. The nature of the possible and necessary revolutionary measures in the sphere of the agrarian question is according to the draft resolution "the improvement in the condition of the peasantry". Thus, the resolution clearly expresses thereby the general conviction of all Social-Democrats that no fundamental change in the present social and economic system can be achieved by these measures. In this we differ from the Socialist-Revolutionaries. The revolutionary movement of the peasants may lead to a considerable improvement in their condition, but not to the supplanting of capitalism by another mode of production.

The resolution speaks of measures that will not halt at the expropriation of the landed estates. It has been said that this formulation modifies our agrarian programme. I consider this opinion wrong. The wording could be improved, of course, to read that it is the peasantry and not our Party that will not halt at expropriation; our Party supports the peasantry and will support it also when it does not halt at such measures. The narrower concept "confiscation" should be used instead of expropriation, since we are emphatically opposed to compensation in any shape or form. We will never hesitate to employ such measures as confiscation of the land. But apart from these partial emendations, we see nothing in our resolution that modifies our agrarian programme. All Social-Democratic publicists have constantly expressed the view that the point concerning the cut-off lands does not by any means set limits to the peasant movement, either to curtail or to restrict it. Both Plekhanov and I have stated in the press that the Social-Democratic Party will never hold the peasantry back from revolutionary measures of agrarian reform, including the "general redistribution"<sup>20</sup> of the land. Thus, we are not modifying our agrarian programme. We must now take a definite stand on the practical question of consistent support to the peasants,

to avoid any possible misunderstandings or misinterpretations. The peasant movement is now on the order of the day, and the party of the proletariat should declare officially that it gives this movement full support and does not in any way limit its scope.

The resolution goes on to speak of the need to bring the interests of the rural proletariat into focus and to organise this proletariat separately. There is hardly any need to defend this simple axiom before a gathering of Social-Democrats. It was stated in the Agrarian Committee that it would be a good thing to add a point on the support of strikes of the farm labourers and peasants, especially during the harvesting, haymaking, etc. In principle, of course, there can be nothing against this. Let our practical workers say what they think of the possible significance of such a point for the immediate future.

The resolution further speaks of the formation of revolutionary peasant committees.

The idea that the demand for the immediate formation of revolutionary peasant committees should be made the pivot of our agitation was developed in *Uperyod*, No. 15. Even the reactionaries now talk of "improving the living conditions", but they stand for an official, bureaucratic way of pseudo-improvement, whereas the Social-Democrats, of course, must stand for the revolutionary way of effecting the improvement. The main task is to instil political consciousness into the peasant movement. The peasants know what they want in a vague sort of way, but they are unable to see their wishes and demands in relation to the entire political system. That is why they are such easy game for political tricksters, who reduce the question of political changes to economic "improvements", which cannot really be effected without political changes. Therefore, the slogan calling for revolutionary peasant committees is the only correct one. Unless these committees are able to enforce the revolutionary law, the

peasants will never be able to hold what they may now win. It is objected that here, too, we are modifying the agrarian programme, which says nothing about *revolutionary* peasant committees or their functions in the field of democratic reforms. This objection does not hold water. We are not modifying our programme but applying it to a concrete case. Since no doubt exists that the peasant committees cannot be anything but revolutionary under the given conditions, by noting this fact we are merely applying the programme to the revolutionary moment, not changing it. Our programme, for instance, declares that we recognise the right of nations to self-determination; if concrete conditions brought us to express ourselves in favour of self-determination of a definite nation, of its complete independence, that would be, not a change of the programme, but its application. The peasant committees are an elastic institution, suitable both under present conditions and under, let us say, a provisional revolutionary government, when they would become organs of the government. Some hold that these committees may become reactionary instead of revolutionary. But we Social-Democrats have never forgotten the dual nature of the peasant or the possibility of a reactionary peasant movement against the proletariat. Not this is the point at issue, but rather that at the present time peasant committees formed to sanction land reforms cannot be anything but revolutionary. At the present time the peasant movement is unquestionably revolutionary. Some say that the peasants will quieten down after they have seized the land. Possibly. But the autocratic government will not quieten down if the peasants seize the land, and this is the crux of the matter. Only a revolutionary government or revolutionary peasant committees can sanction this seizure.

Lastly, the concluding part of the resolution defines once more the position of the Social-Democrats in the peasant committees, namely, the necessity of marching

together with the rural proletariat and organising it separately and independently. In the countryside, too, there can be only one consistently revolutionary class—the proletariat.

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## Two Tactics of Social-Democracy in the Democratic Revolution

(Excerpts)

### 10. "Revolutionary Communes" and the Revolutionary-Democratic Dictatorship of the Proletariat and the Peasantry

The Conference of the new-*Iskra* group<sup>21</sup> did not keep to the anarchist stand into which the new *Iskra* had talked itself (action only "from below", not "from below and from above"). The absurdity of admitting the possibility of an insurrection and not admitting the possibility of victory and participation in a provisional revolutionary government was too glaring. The resolution, therefore, introduced certain reservations and restrictions into the Martynov-Martov solution of the question. Let us consider these reservations, as stated in the following section of the resolution:

"This tactic" ("to remain the party of extreme revolutionary opposition") "does not, of course, in any way exclude the expediency of a partial and episodic seizure of power and the establishment of revolutionary communes in one city or another, or in one district or another, exclusively for the purpose of helping to spread the insurrection and of disrupting the government."

If that is the case, it means the admission in principle of action not only from below, but also from above. It means that the proposition laid down in L. Martov's well-known *feuilleton* in *Iskra* (No. 93) is discarded, and that the tactics of *Uperyod*, i.e., not only "from below", but also "from above", is acknowledged as correct.

Further, the seizure of power (even if partial, episodic, etc.) obviously presupposes participation not only of Social-Democrats, and not only of the proletariat. This follows from the fact that it is not the proletariat alone that is interested and takes an active part in a democratic revolution. It follows from the insurrection being a "popular" one, as is stated at the beginning of the revolution under examination, with "non-proletarian groups" (the words used in the Conference resolution on the uprising), i.e., the bourgeoisie, also taking part in it. Hence, the principle that any participation of socialists in a provisional revolutionary government jointly with the petty bourgeoisie is betrayal of the working class *was thrown overboard by the Conference*, which is what *Uperyod* sought to achieve. "Betrayal" does not cease to be betrayal because the action constituting it is partial, episodic, local, etc. Hence, the idea that participation in a provisional revolutionary government is tantamount to vulgar Jaurèsism *was thrown overboard by the Conference*, which is what *Uperyod* sought to achieve. A government does not cease to be a government because its power extends not to many cities, but to a single city, not to many districts, but to a single district, or because of the name it bears. Thus, *the theoretical presentation of this question, as attempted by the new Iskra, was discarded by the Conference.*

Let us see whether the restrictions the Conference imposed on the formation of revolutionary governments and on participation in them, which are now admitted in principle, are reasonable. We are not aware of the distinction between "episodic" and "provisional".\* We are afraid that the former word, which is "new" and foreign, is merely a screen for lack of clear thinking. It *seems* "more profound", but actually it is only more obscure and con-

\* The first word was in scholarly use at the time, while the second was, and still is, colloquial Russian.—Tr.

fused. What is the difference between the "expediency" of a partial "seizure of power" in a city or district, and participation in a provisional revolutionary government of the entire state? Do not "cities" include a city like St. Petersburg where the events of January 9 took place?<sup>22</sup> Do not districts include the Caucasus, which is bigger than many a state? Will not the problems (which at one time embarrassed the new *Iskra*) of what to do with the prisons, the police, the treasury, etc., confront us the moment we "seize power" even in a single city, let alone in a district? No one will deny, of course, that if we lack sufficient forces, if the insurrection is not wholly successful, or if the victory is indecisive, provisional revolutionary governments may possibly be set up in individual localities, in individual cities and the like. But what has all that got to do with the point at issue, gentlemen? Do not you yourselves, in the beginning of the resolution, speak of a "decisive victory of the revolution", a "victorious popular insurrection"? Since when have Social-Democrats taken over the job of the anarchists: splitting the attention and the aims of the proletariat, and directing its attention to the "partial", instead of the general, the single, the integral, and the complete? While presupposing "seizure of power" in a city, you yourselves speak of "extending the insurrection"—to another city, may we venture to think?—to all cities, may we dare to hope? Your conclusions, gentlemen, are as unsound and haphazard, as contradictory and confused, as your premises. The Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. gave an exhaustive and clear answer to the question of a provisional revolutionary government in general. This answer covers all cases of local provisional governments as well. However, by artificially and arbitrarily isolating a *part* of the question, the Conference's answer merely *evades* the issue as a whole (and that unsuccessfully), and creates confusion.

What is meant by "revolutionary communes"? Does

this concept differ from "a provisional revolutionary government", and, if so, in what respect? The gentlemen of the Conference do not know themselves. Confusion of revolutionary thought leads them, as very often happens, to *revolutionary phrase-mongering*. Indeed, the use of the words "revolutionary commune" in a resolution passed by representatives of Social-Democracy is revolutionary phrase-mongering and nothing else. Marx often condemned such phrase-mongering in which some "charming" terms from the *outworn past* are used to conceal the tasks of the future. In such cases the charm of a term which has already played its part in history becomes so much useless and harmful tinsel, a child's rattle. We must give the workers and the whole people a clear and unambiguous notion as to *why* we want a provisional revolutionary government to be set up, and *exactly what changes* we shall bring about if we exercise decisive influence on the government on the very day following the victory of the popular insurrection which has already commenced. These are questions confronting political leaders.

The Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. replied to these questions with absolute clarity, and drew up a complete programme of these changes—our Party's minimum programme.<sup>23</sup> The word "commune", however, gives no answer at all; it only confuses people's minds with the distant echo of a sonorous phrase or empty rhetoric. The more we cherish, for instance, the memory of the Paris Commune of 1871, the less permissible is it to refer to it offhand, without analysing its mistakes and the special conditions attending it. To do so would mean repeating the absurd example of the Blanquists—whom Engels ridiculed—who (in 1874, in their "Manifesto") paid homage to every act of the Commune.<sup>24</sup> What reply will a conferee give to a worker who asks him about *this* "revolutionary commune", the one that is mentioned in the resolution? He will only be able to tell him that this is

the name by which a certain workers' government is known in history, a government that was unable, and could not at that time, distinguish between the elements of a democratic revolution and a socialist revolution, a government that confused the tasks of fighting for a republic with those of fighting for socialism, was unable to launch an energetic military offensive against Versailles, made a mistake in failing to seize the Bank of France, etc. In short, whether in your answer you refer to the Paris Commune or to some other commune, your answer will be: it was a government *such as ours should not be*. A fine answer, indeed! Does it not testify to pedantic moralising and impotence on the part of a revolutionary, when a resolution says nothing about the practical programme of the Party and inappropriately begins giving lessons from history? Does this not reveal the very mistake we have unsuccessfully been accused of, i.e., confusing a democratic revolution with a socialist revolution, between which none of the "communes" was able to distinguish?

Extending the insurrection and disorganising the government are presented as the "exclusive" aim of a provisional government (so inappropriately termed a "commune"). Taken in its literal sense, the word "exclusive" eliminates all other aims; it is an echo of the absurd theory of "only from below". Such elimination of other aims is another instance of shortsightedness and lack of reflection. A "revolutionary commune", i.e., a revolutionary government, even if only in a single city, will inevitably have to administer (even if provisionally, "partly, episodically") *all* affairs of state and it is the height of folly to hide one's head under one's wing and refuse to see this. This government will have to enact an eight-hour working day, establish workers' inspection of factories, institute free universal education, introduce the election of judges, set up peasant committees, etc.; in a word, it will certainly have to carry out a number of re-

forms. To designate these reforms as "helping to spread the insurrection" would be playing with words and deliberately causing great confusion in a matter that calls for absolute clarity.

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The concluding part of the new-*Iskra* Conference resolution provides no fresh material for a criticism of basic Economist<sup>25</sup> trends that have been revived in our Party, but it does illustrate, from a somewhat different angle, what has been said above.

Here is that concluding part:

"Only in one event should Social-Democracy on its own initiative direct its efforts towards seizing power and holding it as long as possible—namely, in the event of the revolution spreading to the advanced countries of Western Europe, where conditions for the achievement of socialism have already reached a certain[?] degree of maturity. In that event the limited historical scope of the Russian revolution can be considerably widened and the possibility will arise of entering on the path of socialist reforms.

"By basing its tactics on the expectation that during the entire revolutionary period the Social-Democratic Party will retain its stand of extreme revolutionary opposition to all governments that may succeed one another in the course of the revolution, Social-Democracy will best be able to prepare itself to utilise governmental power if it falls [??] into its hands."

The basic idea here is the one repeatedly formulated by *Uporyod*, which has stated that we must not be afraid (as Martynov is) of Social-Democracy's complete victory in a democratic revolution, i.e., of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, for such a victory will enable us to rouse Europe; after throwing off the yoke of the bourgeoisie, the socialist proletariat of Europe will in its turn help us to accomplish

the socialist revolution. But see how the new-*Iskra* rendering impairs this idea. We shall not dwell on details; on the absurd assumption that power could "fall" into the hands of a class-conscious party which considers seizure of power harmful tactics; on the fact that in Europe the conditions for socialism have reached not a certain degree of maturity, but maturity in general; on the fact that our Party programme knows no socialist reforms, but only the socialist revolution. Let us take the principal and basic difference between *Uperyod's* idea and the one presented in the resolution. *Uperyod* set the revolutionary proletariat of Russia an active task: winning the battle for democracy and using this victory to bring the revolution into Europe. The resolution fails to grasp this link between our "decisive victory" (not in the new-*Iskra* sense) and the revolution in Europe, and, therefore, it does not speak of the tasks of the proletariat or the prospects of the latter's victory, but of one of the possibilities in general: "in the event of the revolution spreading..." *Uperyod* pointedly and definitely indicated—and this was incorporated in the resolution of the Third Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party—how "governmental power" can and must "be utilised" in the interests of the proletariat, bearing in mind what can be achieved immediately, at a given stage of social development, and what must first be achieved as a democratic prerequisite of the struggle for socialism. Here, too, the resolution lags hopelessly behind when it states: "will be able to prepare itself to utilise", but fails to say *how* it will be able, *how* it will prepare itself, and to utilise *for what purpose*. We have no doubt, for instance, that the new-*Iskrists* may be "able to prepare themselves to utilise" their leading position in the Party, but the point is that so far their experience of that utilisation, their preparation, does not hold out much hope of possibility becoming reality....

*Uperyod* stated quite definitely wherein lies the real

"possibility of retaining power"—namely, in the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry; in their joint mass strength, which is capable of outweighing all the forces of counter-revolution; in the inevitable concurrence of their interests in *democratic* reforms. Here, too, the resolution of the Conference gives us nothing positive; it merely evades the issue. Surely, the possibility of retaining power in Russia must be determined by the composition of the social forces in Russia herself, by the circumstances of the democratic revolution now taking place in our country. A victory of the proletariat in Europe (it is still quite a far cry from bringing the revolution into Europe to the victory of the proletariat) will give rise to a desperate counter-revolutionary struggle on the part of the Russian bourgeoisie—yet the resolution of the new-*Iskrists* does not say a word about this counter-revolutionary force whose significance was appraised in the resolution of the R.S.D.L.P.'s Third Congress. If, in our fight for a republic and democracy, we could not rely upon the peasantry as well as upon the proletariat, the prospect of our "retaining power" would be hopeless. But if it is not hopeless, if the "revolution's decisive victory over tsarism" opens up such a possibility, then we must indicate it, call actively for its transformation into reality, and issue practical slogans not only *for the contingency* of the revolution being brought into Europe, but also *for the purpose* of taking it there. The reference made by tail-ist Social-Democrats to the "limited historical scope of the Russian revolution" merely serves to cover up their limited understanding of the aims of this democratic revolution, and of the proletariat's leading role in it!

One of the objections raised to the slogan of "the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry" is that dictatorship presupposes a "single will" (*Iskra*, No. 95), and that there can be no single will of the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie. This objec-



tion is unsound, for it is based on an abstract, "metaphysical" interpretation of the term "single will". There may be a single will in one respect and not in another. The absence of unity on questions of socialism and in the struggle for socialism does not preclude singleness of will on questions of democracy and in the struggle for a republic. To forget this would be tantamount to forgetting the logical and historical difference between a democratic revolution and a socialist revolution. To forget this would be tantamount to forgetting the character of the democratic revolution as one of *the whole people*: if it is "of the whole people", that means that there is "singleness of will" precisely in so far as this revolution meets the needs and requirements of the whole people. Beyond the bounds of democratism there can be no question of the proletariat and the peasant bourgeoisie having a single will. Class struggle between them is inevitable, but it is in a democratic republic that this struggle will be the most thoroughgoing and widespread struggle of the people *for socialism*. Like everything else in the world, the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry has a past and a future. Its past is autocracy, serfdom, monarchy, and privilege. In the struggle against this past, in the struggle against counter-revolution, a "single will" of the proletariat and the peasantry is possible, for here there is unity of interests.

Its future is the struggle against private property, the struggle of the wage-worker against the employer, the struggle for socialism. Here singleness of will is impossible.\* Here the path before us lies not from autocracy to a republic, but from a petty-bourgeois democratic republic to socialism.

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\* The development of capitalism, more extensive and rapid in conditions of liberty, will inevitably soon put an end to singleness of will; that will take place the sooner, the earlier counter-revolution and reaction are crushed.

Of course, in actual historical circumstances, the elements of the past become interwoven with those of the future; the two paths cross. Wage-labour with its struggle against private property exists under the autocracy as well; it arises even under serfdom. But this does not in the least prevent us from logically and historically distinguishing between the major stages of development. We all contrapose bourgeois revolution and socialist revolution; we all insist on the absolute necessity of strictly distinguishing between them; however, can it be denied that in the course of history individual, particular elements of the two revolutions become interwoven? Has the period of democratic revolutions in Europe not been familiar with a number of socialist movements and attempts to establish socialism? And will not the future socialist revolution in Europe still have to complete a great deal left undone in the field of democratism?

A Social-Democrat must never for a moment forget that the proletariat will inevitably have to wage a class struggle for socialism even against the most democratic and republican bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie. This is beyond doubt. Hence, the absolute necessity of a separate, independent, strictly class party of Social-Democracy. Hence, the temporary nature of our tactics of "striking a joint blow" with the bourgeoisie and the duty of keeping a strict watch "over our ally, as over an enemy", etc. All this also leaves no room for doubt. However, it would be ridiculous and reactionary to deduce from this that we must forget, ignore, or neglect tasks which, although transient and temporary, are vital at the present time. The struggle against the autocracy is a temporary and transient task for socialists, but to ignore or neglect this task in any way amounts to betrayal of socialism and service to reaction. The revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry is unquestionably only a transient, temporary socialist aim, but to ignore

this aim in the period of a democratic revolution would be downright reactionary.

Concrete political aims must be set in concrete circumstances. All things are relative, all things flow, and all things change. German Social-Democracy does not put into its programme the demand for a republic. The situation in Germany is such that this question can in practice hardly be separated from that of socialism (although with regard to Germany too, Engels in his comments on the draft of the Erfurt Programme in 1891 warned against belittling the importance of a republic and of the struggle for a republic!<sup>26</sup>). In Russian Social-Democracy the question of eliminating the demand for a republic from its programme and its agitation has never even arisen, for in our country there can be no talk of an indissoluble link between the question of a republic and that of socialism. It was quite natural for a German Social-Democrat of 1898 not to place special emphasis on the question of a republic, and this evokes neither surprise nor condemnation. But in 1848 a German Social-Democrat who would have relegated to the background the question of a republic would have been a downright traitor to the revolution. There is no such thing as abstract truth. Truth is always concrete.

The time will come when the struggle against the Russian autocracy will end, and the period of democratic revolution will have passed in Russia; it will then be ridiculous even to speak of "singleness of will" of the proletariat and the peasantry, about a democratic dictatorship, etc. When that time comes we shall deal directly with the question of the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat and speak of it in greater detail. At present the party of the advanced class cannot but strive most energetically for the democratic revolution's decisive victory over tsarism. And a decisive victory means nothing else than the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry.

### NOTE

1) We would remind the reader that in the polemic between *Iskra* and *Uperyod*, the former referred, among other things, to Engels's letter to Turati, in which Engels warned the (future) leader of the Italian reformists against confusing the democratic revolution with the socialist. The impending revolution in Italy, Engels wrote about the political situation in Italy in 1894, would be a petty-bourgeois, democratic and not a socialist revolution. *Iskra* reproached *Uperyod* with having departed from the principle laid down by Engels. This reproach was unjustified, because, on the whole, *Uperyod* (No. 14) fully acknowledged the correctness of Marx's theory of the distinction between the three main forces in nineteenth-century revolutions. According to this theory, the following forces take a stand against the old order, against the autocracy, feudalism, and the serf-owning system: 1) the liberal big bourgeoisie, 2) the radical petty bourgeoisie, 3) the proletariat. The first fights for nothing more than a constitutional monarchy; the second, for a democratic republic; the third, for a socialist revolution. To confuse the petty bourgeoisie's struggle for a complete democratic revolution with the proletariat's struggle for a socialist revolution threatens the socialist with political bankruptcy. Marx's warning to this effect is quite justified. It is, however, precisely for this very reason that the slogan of "revolutionary communes" is erroneous, because the very mistake made by the communes known to history was that of confusing the democratic revolution with the socialist revolution. On the other hand, our slogan—a revolutionary democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry—fully safeguards us against this mistake. While recognising the incontestably bourgeois nature of a revolution incapable of *directly* overstepping the bounds of a mere democratic revolution our slogan *advances* this particular revolution and strives to give it

forms most advantageous to the proletariat; consequently, it strives to make the utmost of the democratic revolution in order to attain the greatest success in the proletariat's further struggle for socialism.

## 12. Will the Sweep of the Democratic Revolution Be Diminished if the Bourgeoisie Recoils From It?

(Excerpt)

Have you, gentlemen, ever given thought to real social forces that determine "the sweep of the revolution"? Let us disregard the foreign political forces, the international combinations, which have developed very favourably for us at the present time, but which we all leave out of the discussion, and rightly so, inasmuch as we are concerned with the question of Russia's internal forces. Examine these internal social forces. Aligned against the revolution are the autocracy, the imperial court, the police, the bureaucracy, the army, and a handful of the aristocracy. The deeper the indignation of the people grows, the less reliable the troops become, and the more the bureaucracy wavers. Moreover, the bourgeoisie, on the whole, is now in favour of revolution, zealously speechifying about liberty and holding forth more and more frequently in the name of the people and even in the name of the revolution.\* But we Marxists all know from theory and from daily and hourly observation of our liberals, Zemstvo people, and *Osvobozhdeniye* supporters<sup>27</sup> that the bourgeoisie is inconsistent, self-seeking, and cowardly in its support of the revolution. The bourgeoisie, in the mass, will inevitably turn towards counter-revolution, towards

\* Of interest in this connection is Mr. Struve's open letter to Jaurès recently published by the latter in *L'Humanité* and by Mr. Struve in *Osvobozhdeniye*, No. 72.

the autocracy, against the revolution, and against the people, as soon as its narrow, selfish interests are met, as soon as it "recoils" from consistent democracy (*and it is already recoiling from it!*). There remains the "people", that is, the proletariat and the peasantry: the proletariat alone can be relied on to march on to the end, for it goes far beyond the democratic revolution. That is why the proletariat fights in the forefront for a republic and contemptuously rejects stupid and unworthy advice to take into account the possibility of the bourgeoisie recoiling. The peasantry includes a great number of semi-proletarian as well as petty-bourgeois elements. This makes it also unstable, compelling the proletariat to rally in a strictly class party. However, the instability of the peasantry differs radically from that of the bourgeoisie, for at present the peasantry is interested not so much in the absolute preservation of private property as in the confiscation of the landed estates, one of the principal forms of private property. Without thereby becoming socialist, or ceasing to be petty-bourgeois, the peasantry is capable of becoming a wholehearted and most radical adherent of the democratic revolution. The peasantry will inevitably become such if only the course of revolutionary events, which brings it enlightenment, is not prematurely cut short by the treachery of the bourgeoisie and the defeat of the proletariat. Subject to this condition the peasantry will inevitably become a bulwark of the revolution and the republic, for only a completely victorious revolution can give the peasantry *everything* in the sphere of agrarian reforms—*everything* that the peasants desire, dream of, and truly need (not for the abolition of capitalism as the "Socialist-Revolutionaries"<sup>28</sup> imagine, but) in order to emerge from the mire of semi-serfdom, from the gloom of oppression and servitude, in order to improve their living conditions, as much as they can be improved within the system of commodity production.

Moreover, it is not only by the prospect of radical agrarian reform that the peasantry is attached to the revolution, but by all its general and permanent interests as well. Even when fighting with the proletariat, the peasantry stands in need of democracy, for only a democratic system is capable of accurately expressing its interests and ensuring its predominance as a mass, as the majority. The more enlightened the peasantry becomes (and since the war with Japan<sup>29</sup> it is becoming enlightened at a pace unsuspected by many who are accustomed to measure enlightenment with the school yardstick), the more consistently and resolutely will it stand for a thoroughgoing democratic revolution; for, unlike the bourgeoisie, it has nothing to fear from the people's supremacy, but on the contrary stands to gain by it. A democratic republic will become the peasantry's ideal as soon as it begins to throw off its naïve monarchism, because the conscious monarchism of the bourgeois stockjobbers (with an upper chamber, etc.) implies for the peasantry the same absence of rights and the same oppression and ignorance as it suffers today, only slightly polished over with the varnish of European constitutionalism.

That is why, as a class, the bourgeoisie naturally and inevitably tends to come under the wing of the liberal-monarchist party, while the peasantry, in the mass, tends to come under the leadership of the revolutionary and republican party. That is why the bourgeoisie is incapable of carrying through the democratic revolution to its consummation, while the peasantry is capable of doing so, and we must exert all our efforts to help it do so.

The objection may be raised that this goes without saying, is all ABC, something that all Social-Democrats understand perfectly well. No, that is not the case; it is not understood by those who can talk about "the diminishing sweep" of the revolution as a consequence of the

bourgeoisie falling away from it. Such people repeat the words of our agrarian programme, which they have learned by rote without understanding their meaning, for otherwise they would not be frightened by the concept of the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry, which inevitably follows from the entire Marxist world outlook and from our programme; otherwise they would not restrict the sweep of the great Russian revolution to the limits to which the bourgeoisie is prepared to go. Such people defeat their abstract Marxist revolutionary phrases by their concrete anti-Marxist and anti-revolutionary resolutions.

Those who really understand the role of the peasantry in a victorious Russian revolution would not dream of saying that the sweep of the revolution will be diminished if the bourgeoisie recoils from it. For, in actual fact, the Russian revolution will begin to assume its real sweep, and will really assume the widest revolutionary sweep possible in the epoch of bourgeois-democratic revolution, only when the bourgeoisie recoils from it and when the masses of the peasantry come out as active revolutionaries side by side with the proletariat. To be consistently carried through to the end, our democratic revolution must rely on forces capable of paralysing the inevitable inconsistency of the bourgeoisie (i.e., capable precisely of "making it recoil from the revolution", which the Caucasian adherents of *Iskra* fear so much because of their thoughtlessness).

*The proletariat must carry the democratic revolution to completion, allying to itself the mass of the peasantry in order to crush the autocracy's resistance by force and paralyse the bourgeoisie's instability. The proletariat must accomplish the socialist revolution, allying to itself the mass of the semi-proletarian elements of the population, so as to crush the bourgeoisie's resistance by force and paralyse the instability of the peasantry and the petty*

*bourgeoisie*. Such are the tasks of the proletariat, so narrowly presented by the new-*Iskra* group in all their arguments and resolutions on the sweep of the revolution.

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### Social-Democracy's Attitude Toward the Peasant Movement

The tremendous importance of the peasant movement in the democratic revolution Russia is now passing through has been repeatedly explained in the entire Social-Democratic press. As is well known, the Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. passed a special resolution on this question in order to define more exactly and to co-ordinate the activities of the whole party of the class-conscious proletariat with regard to the peasant movement of today. Although the resolution was drawn up in advance (the first draft was published in *Uperyod*, No. 11, March 10 [23], 1905), and although it was carefully gone over at the Party Congress, which took pains to formulate the views already established throughout the Russian Social-Democratic movement—the resolution has nevertheless perplexed a number of comrades working in Russia. The Saratov Committee has unanimously declared this resolution unacceptable (see *Proletary*, No. 10<sup>30</sup>). It is to be regretted that an explanation of this verdict, as requested by us at the time, has not yet been forthcoming. We only know that the Saratov Committee has declared also unacceptable the agrarian resolution passed by the new-*Iskra* Conference—consequently they are dissatisfied by what is common to both resolutions, not by what distinguishes them.

New material on this question is provided by a letter we have received from a Moscow comrade (issued in the

form of a hectographed leaflet). We print this letter in full:

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE  
AND TO THE COMRADES WORKING  
IN THE RURAL DISTRICTS

Comrades,

The regional organisation of the Moscow Committee has taken up work among the peasants. The lack of experience in organising such work, the special conditions prevailing in the rural districts of Central Russia, and also the lack of clarity in the directives contained in the resolutions of the Third Congress on this question, and the almost complete absence of material in the periodical and other press on work among the peasantry, compel us to appeal to the Central Committee to send us detailed directives, covering both the theoretical aspect and the practical questions involved, while we ask comrades who are doing similar work to acquaint us with the practical knowledge your experience has given you.

We consider it necessary to inform you about the misgivings that have arisen among us after reading the resolution of the Third Congress "on the attitude toward the peasant movement", and about the organisational plan which we are already beginning to apply in our work in the rural districts.

"§ a) To carry on propaganda among the mass of the people, explaining that Social-Democracy aims at giving the most energetic support to all revolutionary measures taken by the peasantry and likely to improve their condition, measures including confiscation of land belonging to the landlords, the state, the church, the monasteries, and the imperial family" (from the resolution of the Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.).

First of all, this paragraph does not clarify how Party organisations will, or should, carry on their propaganda. Propaganda requires, first and foremost, an organisation standing very close to those who are to be propagandised. Whether this organisation should consist of committees of the rural proletariat, or whether other organisational forms of oral and printed propaganda are possible—this question remains unanswered.

The same applies to the promise to give energetic support. To give support, and energetic support at that, is also possible only if local organisations exist. To us the question of "energetic support" seems in general very vague. Can Social-Democracy support the expropriation of landlords' estates that are farmed most intensively, with the use of machinery, cultivating high-grade crops, etc.? The transfer of such estates to petty-bourgeois proprietors, however

important improvement of their condition may be, would be a step back from the standpoint of the capitalist development of the given estate. In our opinion we as Social-Democrats should have made a reservation on this matter of "support": "provided the expropriation of this land and its transfer to peasant (petty-bourgeois) ownership results in a higher form of economic development on these estates".

Further:

"§ d) To strive for the independent organisation of the rural proletariat, for its fusion with the urban proletariat under the banner of the Social-Democratic Party, and for the inclusion of its representatives in the peasant committees."

Doubts arise with regard to the latter part of this paragraph. The fact is that bourgeois-democratic organisations such as the Peasant Union,<sup>31</sup> and reactionary-utopian organisations such as the Socialist-Revolutionaries organise under their banner both bourgeois and proletarian elements of the peasantry. By bringing into such "peasant" committees our representatives from rural proletarian organisations we shall be contradicting ourselves, our stand regarding a bloc, etc.

Here, too, we believe, amendments, and very serious ones, are needed.

These are a few general remarks on the resolutions of the Third Congress. These should be analysed as soon and in as great detail as possible.

As regards the plan for a "rural" organisation in our Regional Organisation, we must say that we have to work under conditions which are not even mentioned in the resolutions of the Third Congress. First of all, it should be noted that the territory we cover—Moscow Gubernia and the adjoining uyezds of neighbouring gubernias—is mainly an industrial area with a relatively low level of handicraft industry and with a very small section of the population engaged *exclusively* in agriculture. Huge textile mills, each employing 10,000 to 15,000 workers, alternate with small factories, employing 500 to 1,000 workers and scattered in out-of-the-way hamlets and villages. One would think that in such conditions Social-Democracy would find here a most favourable field for its activities, but facts have proved that so superficial an assumption does not hold water. Although some of the factories have been in existence for 40 or 50 years, the overwhelming majority of our "proletariat" have not yet become divorced from the land. The "village" has such a strong hold over them, that none of the psychological and other characteristics acquired by a "pure" proletarian in the course of collective work develops among our proletarians. The farming carried on by our "proletarians" is of a peculiarly

linsey-woolsey type. A weaver employed in a mill hires a labourer to till his patch of land. His wife (if she is not working at the mill), his children, and the aged and invalid members of the family work on this same piece of land, and he himself will work on it when he becomes old or maimed, or is discharged for violent or suspicious behaviour. Such "proletarians" can hardly be called proletarians. Their economic status is that of paupers; their ideology is that of petty bourgeois. They are ignorant and conservative. It is from such that Black-Hundred elements<sup>32</sup> are recruited. However, even among these people class-consciousness has begun to awaken of late. Through the agency of "pure" proletarians we are endeavouring to rouse these ignorant masses from their age-old slumber, and not without success. Our contacts are increasing in number, and in places our foothold is becoming firmer, the paupers are coming under our influence, beginning to adopt our ideology, both in the factory and in the village. And we believe that it will not be unorthodox to form organisations in an environment that is not "purely" proletarian. We have no other environment, and were we to insist on orthodoxy and organise only the rural "proletariat", we would have to disband our organisation and those in the neighbouring districts. We know we shall have difficulties in struggling against the urge to expropriate the arable and other land neglected by the landlords, or those lands which the holy fathers in cowl and cassock have not been able to farm properly. We know that bourgeois democracy, from the "democratic"-monarchist faction (such a faction exists in Ruza Uyezd) down to the "Peasant" Union, will fight us for influence among the "paupers", but we shall arm the latter to oppose the former. We shall make use of all Social-Democratic forces in the region, both intellectual and proletarian, to set up and consolidate our Social-Democratic committees of "paupers". And we shall do this in accordance with the following plan. In each uyezd town, or big industrial centre we shall set up uyezd committees of groups coming under the Regional Organisation. In addition to setting up factory committees in its district the uyezd committee will also set up "peasant" committees. For reasons of secrecy these committees should not have many people on them and should be made up of the most revolutionary and capable pauperised peasants. Wherever there are both factories and peasants, workers and peasants should be organised in a single subgroup committee.

In the first place, such committees should have a clear and exact idea of local conditions: A) Agrarian relationship; 1) peasant allotments, leases, form of tenure (communal, by households, etc.); 2) the neighbouring land: a) to whom it belongs, b) the amount of land; c) what relation the peasants have to this land;

d) on what terms the land is held: 1) labour rent, 2) excessive rent for "cut-off lands", etc.; e) indebtedness to kulaks, landlords, etc. B) Imposts, taxes, the rate of assessment of peasant and landlord lands respectively. C) Migratory labour and handicraft industries, passports, whether there is winter hiring, etc. D) Local factories and plants: the working conditions there: 1) wages, 2) working hours. 3) the attitude of the management, 4) housing conditions, etc. E) The Administration: the rural superintendents, the volost headman, the clerk, the volost judges, constables, the priest. F) The Zemstvo: councillors representing the peasants, Zemstvo employees: the teacher, the doctor, libraries, schools, tea-rooms. G) Volost assemblies: their composition and procedure. H) Organisations: the Peasant Union, Socialist-Revolutionaries, Social-Democrats..

After familiarising itself with all these data the Peasant Social-Democratic Committee is obliged to get such decisions passed by the assemblies as may be necessitated by any abnormal state of affairs. This committee should simultaneously carry on among the masses intense propaganda and agitation for the ideas of Social-Democracy, organise study circles, impromptu meetings, mass meetings, distribute leaflets and other literature, collect funds for the Party, and keep in touch with the Regional Organisation through the uyezd group.

If we succeed in setting up a number of such committees the success of Social-Democracy will be assured.

*Regional Organiser*

It goes without saying that we shall not undertake the task of working out the detailed practical directives to which the comrades refers: this is a matter for the comrades on the spot and for the central body in Russia which is guiding the practical work. We propose to take the opportunity presented by our Moscow comrade's interesting letter to explain the resolution of the Third Congress and the urgent tasks of the Party in general. It is obvious from the letter that the misunderstandings caused by the resolution of the Third Congress are only partly due to doubts in the field of theory. Another source is the *new* question, which has not arisen before, about the relations between the "revolutionary peasant committees" and the "*Social-Democratic Committees*" which are working among the peasants. The very posing of this



question testifies to the big step forward made in Social-Democratic work among the peasants. Questions of—relatively speaking—detail are now being brought into the foreground by the practical requirements of “rural” agitation, which is striking root and assuming stable and permanent forms. And the author of the letter keeps forgetting that when he blames the Congress resolution for lack of clarity, he is in fact seeking an answer to a question which the Congress of the Party did not raise and could not have raised.

For instance, the author is not quite right when he says that both propagation of our ideas and support for the peasant movement are possible “only” if local organisations exist. Of course such organisations are desirable, and as the work increases they will become necessary; but such work is possible and necessary even where no such organisations exist. In all our activities, even when carried on exclusively among the urban proletariat, we must never lose sight of the peasant question and must disseminate the declaration made by the *entire party of the class-conscious proletariat* in the person of the Third Congress, namely, that we support a peasant uprising. The peasants must learn this—from literature, from the workers, from special organisations, etc. The peasants must learn that in giving this support the Social-Democratic proletariat will *not stop short* of any form of confiscation of the land (i.e., expropriation without compensation to the owners).

A question of theory has in this connection been raised by the author of the letter, whether the expropriation of the big estates and their transfer to “peasant, petty-bourgeois ownership” should not be specifically qualified. But by proposing such a reservation the author has arbitrarily limited the purport of the resolution of the Third Congress. There is *not a word* in the resolution about the Social-Democratic Party undertaking to support transfer of the confiscated land to petty-bourgeois proprietors. The

resolution states: we support... “up to and including confiscation”, i.e., including expropriation without compensation; however, the resolution does not in any way decide to whom the expropriated land is to be given. It was not by chance that the question was left open: it is obvious from the articles in *Uperyod* (Nos. 11, 12, 15) that it was deemed unwise to decide this question in advance. It was stated there, for instance, that under a democratic republic Social-Democracy cannot pledge itself and have its hands tied with regard to nationalisation of the land.

Indeed, it is the revolutionary-democratic aspect of the peasant uprisings and a particular organisation of the rural proletariat in a class party that *at present* form the crux of the matter for us, as distinct from the petty-bourgeois Socialist-Revolutionaries. It is not schemes of a “general redistribution” or nationalisation that is the kernel of the question; the essential thing is that the peasantry see the need for, and accomplish, the *revolutionary* demolition of the old order. That is why the Socialist-Revolutionaries are pressing for “socialisation”, etc., while we are pressing for *revolutionary peasant committees*: without the latter, we say, all reforms amount to nothing. With them and supported by them the *victory of the peasant uprising* is possible.

We must help the peasant uprising in every way, up to and including confiscation of the land, *but certainly not including all sorts of petty-bourgeois schemes*. We support the peasant movement to the extent that it is revolutionary-democratic. We are making ready (doing so now, at once) to fight it when, and to the extent that, it becomes reactionary and anti-proletarian. The essence of Marxism lies in that double task, which only those who do not understand Marxism can vulgarise or compress into a single and simple task.

Let us take a concrete instance. Let us assume that the peasant uprising has been victorious. The revolutionary peasant committees and the provisional revolutionary

government (relying, in part, on these very committees) can proceed to any confiscation of big property. We are in favour of confiscation, as we have already declared. But to whom shall we recommend giving the confiscated land? On this question we have not committed ourselves nor shall we ever do so by declarations like those rashly proposed by the author of the letter. The latter has forgotten that the same resolution of the Third Congress speaks of "*purging the revolutionary-democratic content of the peasant movement of all reactionary admixtures*"—that is one point—and, secondly, of the need "*in all cases and under all circumstances for the independent organisation of the rural proletariat*". These are our directives. There will always be reactionary admixtures in the peasant movement, and we declare war on them in advance. Class antagonism between the rural proletariat and the peasant bourgeoisie is unavoidable, and we disclose it in advance, explain it, and *prepare for the struggle on the basis of that antagonism*. One of the immediate causes of such a struggle may very likely be provided by the question: to whom shall the confiscated land be given, and how? We do not gloss over that question, nor do we promise equalitarian distribution, "socialisation", etc. What we do say is that this is a question we shall fight out later on, fight again, on a new field and with other allies. There, we shall certainly be with the rural proletariat, with the entire working class, *against* the peasant bourgeoisie. In practice this may mean the transfer of the land to the class of petty peasant proprietors—wherever big estates based on bondage and feudal servitude still prevail, and there are as yet no material conditions for large-scale socialist production; it may mean nationalisation—given complete victory of the democratic revolution—or the big capitalist estates being transferred to *workers' associations*, for from the democratic revolution we shall at once, and precisely in accordance with the measure of our strength, the strength of the class-conscious and organised prole-

tariat, begin to pass to the socialist revolution. We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop half-way. If we do not now and immediately promise all sorts of "socialisation", that is because we know the actual conditions for that task to be accomplished, and we do not gloss over the new class struggle burgeoning within the peasantry, but reveal that struggle.

At first we support the peasantry *en masse* against the landlords, support it to the hilt and with all means, including confiscation, and then (it would be better to say, at the same time) we support the proletariat against the peasantry *en masse*. To try to calculate *now* what the combination of forces will be within the peasantry "on the day after" the revolution (the democratic revolution) is empty utopianism. Without falling into adventurism or going against our conscience in matters of science, without striving for cheap popularity we can and do assert *only one thing*: we shall bend every effort to help the entire peasantry achieve the democratic revolution, *in order thereby to make it easier* for us, the party of the proletariat, to pass on as quickly as possible to the new and higher task—the socialist revolution. We promise no harmony, no equalitarianism or "socialisation" following the victory of the *present* peasant uprising, on the contrary, we "promise" a new struggle, new inequality, the new revolution we are striving for. Our doctrine is less "sweet" than the legends of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, but let those who want to be fed solely on sweets join the Socialist-Revolutionaries; we shall say to such people: good riddance.

In our opinion this Marxist point of view settles also the question of the committees. In our opinion *there should be no Social-Democratic peasant committees*. If they are Social-Democratic, that means they are not purely peasant committees; if they are peasant committees, that means they are not purely proletarian, not Social-Democratic committees. There is a host of such who would confuse the two, but we are not of their number. Wherever

possible we shall strive to set up *our* committees, committees of the *Social-Democratic Labour Party*. They will consist of peasants, paupers, intellectuals, prostitutes (a worker recently asked us in a letter why not carry on agitation among the prostitutes), soldiers, teachers, workers—in short, *all Social-Democrats, and none but Social-Democrats*. These committees will conduct the whole of Social-Democratic work, in its full scope, striving, however, to organise the rural proletariat especially and particularly, since the Social-Democratic Party is the class party of the proletariat. To consider it “unorthodox” to organise a proletariat which has not entirely freed itself from various relics of the past is a *tremendous delusion*, and we would like to think that the relevant passages of the letter are due to a mere misunderstanding. The urban and industrial proletariat will inevitably be the nucleus of our Social-Democratic Labour Party, but we must attract to it, enlighten, and organise all who labour and are exploited, as stated in our programme—all without exception: handicraftsmen, paupers, beggars, servants, tramps, prostitutes—of course, subject to the necessary and obligatory condition that they join the Social-Democratic movement and not that the Social-Democratic movement join them, that they adopt the standpoint of the proletariat, and not that the proletariat adopt theirs.

The reader may ask—what is the point, then, of having revolutionary peasant committees? Does this mean that they are not necessary? No, they are necessary. Our ideal is purely Social-Democratic committees in all rural districts, and then agreement between them and *all* revolutionary-democratic elements, groups, and circles of the peasantry for the purpose of establishing revolutionary committees. There is a perfect analogy here to the independence of the Social-Democratic Labour Party in the towns and its alliance with all the revolutionary democrats for the purpose of insurrection. We are in favour of a peasant uprising. We are absolutely opposed to the mixing and

merging of heterogeneous parties. We hold that for the purpose of insurrection Social-Democracy should give an impetus to *all* revolutionary democracy, should help it *all* to organise, should *march shoulder to shoulder* with it, but without merging with it, to the barricades in the cities, and against the landlords and the police in the villages.

Long live the insurrection in town and country against the autocracy! Long live revolutionary Social-Democracy, the vanguard of all revolutionary democracy in the present revolution!

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### Petty-Bourgeois and Proletarian Socialism

Of the various socialist doctrines, Marxism is now predominant in Europe, the struggle for the achievement of a socialist order being almost entirely waged as a struggle of the working class under the guidance of the Social-Democratic parties. This complete predominance of proletarian socialism grounded in the teachings of Marxism was not achieved all at once, but only after a long struggle against all sorts of outworn doctrines, petty-bourgeois socialism, anarchism, and so on. Some thirty years ago, Marxism was not predominant even in Germany, where the prevailing views of the time were in fact transitional, mixed and eclectic, lying between petty-bourgeois and proletarian socialism. The most widespread doctrines among advanced workers in the Romance countries, in France, Spain, and Belgium, were Proudhonism,<sup>33</sup> Blanquism, and anarchism, which obviously expressed the viewpoint of the petty bourgeois, not of the proletarian.

What has been the cause of this rapid and complete victory of Marxism during the last decades? The correctness of the Marxist views has been confirmed to an ever greater extent by all the development of contemporary societies, both politically and economically, and by the whole experience of the revolutionary movement and of the struggle of the oppressed classes. The decline of the petty bourgeoisie inevitably led, sooner or later, to the extinction of all kinds of petty-bourgeois prejudices, while

the growth of capitalism and the intensification of the class struggle within capitalist society were the best agitation for the ideas of proletarian socialism.

Russia's backwardness naturally accounts for the firm footing that various obsolete socialist doctrines gained in our country. The entire history of Russian revolutionary thought during the last quarter of a century is the history of the struggle waged by Marxism against petty-bourgeois Narodnik socialism. While the rapid growth and remarkable successes of the Russian working-class movement have already brought victory to Marxism in Russia too, the development of an indubitably revolutionary peasant movement—especially after the famous peasant revolts in the Ukraine in 1902<sup>34</sup>—has on the other hand caused a certain revival of senile Narodism. The Narodnik theories of old, embellished with modish European opportunism (revisionism, Bernsteinism,<sup>35</sup> and criticism of Marx), make up all the original ideological stock-in-trade of the so-called Socialist-Revolutionaries. That is why the peasant question is focal in the Marxists' controversies with both the pure Narodniks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries.

To a certain extent Narodism was an integral and consistent doctrine. It denied the domination of capitalism in Russia; it denied the factory workers' role as the front-line fighters of the entire proletariat; it denied the importance of a political revolution and bourgeois political liberty; it preached an immediate socialist revolution, stemming from the peasant commune with its petty forms of husbandry. All that now survives of this integral theory is mere shreds, but to understand the controversies of the present day intelligently, and to prevent these controversies from degenerating into mere squabbles, one should always remember the general and basic Narodnik roots of the errors of our Socialist-Revolutionaries.

The Narodniks considered the muzhik the man of the future in Russia, this view springing inevitably from their

faith in the socialist character of the peasant commune, from their lack of faith in the future of capitalism. The Marxists considered the worker the man of the future in Russia, and the development of Russian capitalism in both agriculture and industry is providing more and more confirmation of their views. The working-class movement in Russia has won recognition for itself, but as for the peasant movement, the gulf separating Narodism and Marxism is to this day revealed in their different *interpretations* of this movement. To the Narodniks, the peasant movement provides a refutation of Marxism. It is a movement that stands for a direct socialist revolution; it does not recognise bourgeois political liberty; it stems from small-scale, not large-scale, production. In a word, to the Narodnik, it is the peasant movement that is the genuine, truly socialist and immediately socialist movement. The Narodnik faith in the peasant commune and the Narodnik brand of anarchism fully explain why such conclusions are inevitable.

To the Marxist, the peasant movement is a democratic, not a socialist, movement. In Russia, just as was the case in other countries, it is a necessary concomitant of the democratic revolution, which is bourgeois in its social and economic content. It is not in the least directed against the foundations of the bourgeois order, against commodity production, or against capital. On the contrary, it is directed against the old, serf, pre-capitalist relationships in the rural districts, and against landed proprietorship, which is the mainstay of all the survivals of serf-ownership. Consequently, full victory of this peasant movement will not abolish capitalism; on the contrary, it will create a broader foundation for its development, and will hasten and intensify purely capitalist development. Full victory of the peasant uprising can only create a stronghold for a democratic bourgeois republic, within which a proletarian struggle against the bourgeoisie will for the first time develop in its purest form.

These, then, are the two contrasting views which must be clearly understood by anyone who wishes to examine the gulf in principles that lies between the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Social-Democrats. According to one view, the peasant movement is socialist, while according to the other it is a democratic-bourgeois movement. Hence one can see what ignorance our Socialist-Revolutionaries reveal when they repeat for the hundredth time (see, for example, *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya*, No. 75<sup>36</sup>) that orthodox Marxists have ignored the peasant question. There is only one way of combating such crass ignorance, and that is by repeating the ABC, by setting forth the old consistently Narodnik views, and by pointing out for the hundredth or the thousandth time that the real distinction between us does not lie in a desire or the non-desire to reckon with the peasant question, in recognition or non-recognition of it, but in our *different appraisals* of the present-day peasant movement and of the present-day peasant question in Russia. He who says that the Marxists ignore the peasant question in Russia is, in the first place, an absolute ignoramus since all the principal writings of Russian Marxists, beginning with Plekhanov's *Our Differences* (which appeared over twenty years ago), have in the main been devoted to explaining the erroneousness of the Narodnik views on the Russian peasant question. Secondly, he who says that the Marxists ignore the peasant question thereby proves his desire to avoid giving a complete appraisal of the actual difference in principles, giving the answer to the question whether or not the present-day peasant movement is democratic-bourgeois, whether or not it is objectively directed against the survivals of serfdom.

The Socialist-Revolutionaries have never given, nor will they ever be able to give, a clear and precise answer to this question, for they are floundering hopelessly between the old Narodnik view and the present-day Marxist view on the peasant question in Russia. The Marxists say that

the Socialist-Revolutionaries represent the standpoint of the petty bourgeoisie (are ideologists of the petty bourgeoisie) for the very reason that they cannot rid themselves of petty-bourgeois illusions and of the Narodnik imaginings in appraising the peasant movement.

That is why we have to go over the ABC once again. What is the present-day peasant movement in Russia striving for? For land and liberty. What significance will the complete victory of this movement have? After winning liberty, it will abolish the rule of the landlords and bureaucrats in the administration of the state. After securing the land, it will give the landlords' estates to the peasants. Will the fullest liberty and expropriation of the landlords do away with commodity production? No, it will not. Will the fullest liberty and expropriation of the landlords abolish individual farming by peasant households on communal, or "socialised", land? No, it will not. Will the fullest liberty and expropriation of the landlords bridge the deep gulf that separates the rich peasant, with his numerous horses and cows, from the farm-hand, the day-labourer, i.e., the gulf that separates the peasant bourgeoisie from the rural proletariat? No, it will not. On the contrary, the more completely the highest *social-estate* (the landlords) is routed and annihilated, the more profound will the *class* distinction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat be. What will be the objective significance of the complete victory of the peasant uprising? This victory will do away with all survivals of serfdom, but it will by no means destroy the bourgeois economic system, or destroy capitalism or the division of society into classes—into rich and poor, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Why is the present-day peasant movement a democratic-bourgeois movement? Because, after destroying the power of the bureaucracy and the landlords, it will set up a democratic system of society, without, however, altering the bourgeois foundation of that democratic society, without abolishing the

rule of capital. How should the class-conscious worker, the socialist, regard the present-day peasant movement? He must support this movement, help the peasants in the most energetic fashion, help them throw off completely both the rule of the bureaucracy and that of the landlords. At the same time, however, he should explain to the peasants that it is not enough to overthrow the rule of the bureaucracy and the landlords. When they overthrow that rule, they must at the same time prepare for the abolition of the rule of capital, the rule of the bourgeoisie, and for that purpose a doctrine that is fully socialist, i.e., Marxist, should be immediately disseminated, the rural proletarians should be united, welded together, and organised for the struggle against the peasant bourgeoisie and the entire Russian bourgeoisie. Can a class-conscious worker forget the democratic struggle for the sake of the socialist struggle, or forget the latter for the sake of the former? No, a class-conscious worker calls himself a Social-Democrat for the reason that he understands the relation between the two struggles. He knows that there is no other road to socialism save the road through democracy, through political liberty. He therefore strives to achieve democracy completely and consistently in order to attain the ultimate goal—socialism. Why are the conditions for the democratic struggle not the same as those for the socialist struggle? Because the workers will certainly have different allies in each of those two struggles. The democratic struggle is waged by the workers together with a section of the bourgeoisie, especially the petty bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the socialist struggle is waged by the workers against the whole of the bourgeoisie. The struggle against the bureaucrat and the landlord can and must be waged together with all the peasants, even the well-to-do and the middle peasants. On the other hand, it is only together with the rural proletariat that the struggle against the bourgeoisie, and therefore against the well-to-do peasants too, can be properly waged.

If we keep in mind all these elementary Marxist truths, which the Socialist-Revolutionaries always prefer to avoid going into, we shall have no difficulty in appraising the latter's "latest" objections to Marxism, such as the following:

"Why was it necessary," *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya* (No. 75) exclaims, "first to support the peasant in general against the landlord, and then (i.e., at the same time) to support the proletariat against the peasant in general, instead of at once supporting the proletariat against the landlord; and what Marxism has to do with this, heaven alone knows."

This is the standpoint of the most primitive, childish naïve anarchism. For many centuries and even for thousands of years, mankind has dreamt of doing away "at once" with all and every kind of exploitation. These dreams remained mere dreams until millions of the exploited all over the world began to unite for a consistent, staunch, and comprehensive struggle to change capitalist society in the direction the evolution of that society is naturally taking. Socialist dreams turned into the socialist struggle of the millions only when Marx's scientific socialism had linked up the urge for change with the struggle of a definite class. Outside the class struggle, socialism is either a hollow phrase or a naïve dream. In Russia, however, two different struggles of two different social forces are taking place before our very eyes. The proletariat is fighting against the bourgeoisie wherever capitalist relations of production exist (and they exist—he it known to our Socialist-Revolutionaries—even in the peasant commune, i.e., on the land which from their standpoint is one hundred per cent "socialised"). As a stratum of small landowners, of petty bourgeois, the peasantry is fighting against all survivals of serfdom, against the bureaucrats and the landlords. Only those who are completely ignorant of political economy and of the history of revolutions throughout the world can fail to see that these

are two distinct and different social wars. To shut one's eyes to the diversity of these wars by demanding "at once", is like hiding one's head under one's wing and refusing to make any analysis of reality.

The Socialist-Revolutionaries, who have lost the integrity of the old Narodnik views, have even forgotten many of the teachings of the Narodniks themselves. As the selfsame *Revolutsionnaya Rossiya* writes in the same article: "By helping the peasantry to expropriate the landlords, Mr. Lenin is unconsciously assisting in building up petty-bourgeois economy on the ruins of the more or less developed forms of capitalist agriculture. Is not this a 'step backward' from the standpoint of orthodox Marxism?"

For shame, gentlemen! Why, you have forgotten your own Mr. V. V.! Consult his *Destiny of Capitalism*, the *Sketches* by Mr. Nikolai—on,<sup>37</sup> and other sources of your wisdom. You will then recollect that landlord farming in Russia combines within itself features both of capitalism and of serf-ownership. You will then find out that there is a system of economy based on labour rent, which is a direct survival of the corvée system. If, moreover, you take the trouble to consult such an orthodox Marxist hook as the third volume of Marx's *Capital*, you will find that nowhere could the corvée system develop, and nowhere did it develop, and turn into capitalist farming except through the medium of petty-bourgeois peasant farming. In your efforts to scatter Marxism to the winds, you resort to methods too primitive, methods too long ago exposed; you ascribe to Marxism a grotesquely oversimplified conception of large-scale capitalist farming directly succeeding to large-scale farming based on the corvée system. You argue that since the yield on the landlords' estates is higher than on the peasant farms the expropriation of the landlords is a step backward. This argument is worthy of a fourth-form schoolboy. Just consider, gentlemen: was it not a "step backward" to separate the low-



yielding peasant lands from the high-yielding landlords' estates when serfdom was abolished?

Present-day landlord economy in Russia combines features of both capitalism and serf-ownership. Objectively, the peasants' struggle against the landlords today is a struggle against survivals of serfdom. However, to attempt to enumerate all individual cases, to weigh each individual case, and to determine with the precision of an apothecary's scales exactly where serf-ownership ends and pure capitalism begins, is to ascribe one's own pedantry to the Marxists. We cannot calculate what portion of the price of provisions bought from a petty shopkeeper represents labour-value and what part of it represents swindling, etc. Does that mean, gentlemen, that we must discard the theory of labour-value?

Contemporary landlord economy combines features of both capitalism and serfdom. But only pedants can conclude from this that it is our duty to weigh, count, and copy out every minute feature in every particular instance, and pigeon-hole it in this or that social category. Only utopians can hence conclude that "there is no need" for us to draw a distinction between the two different social wars. Indeed, the only actual conclusion that does follow is that both in our programme and in our tactics we must combine the purely proletarian struggle against capitalism with the general democratic (and general peasant) struggle against serfdom.

The more marked the capitalist features in present-day landlord semi-feudal economy, the more imperative is it to get right down to organising the rural proletariat separately, for this will help purely capitalist, or purely proletarian, antagonisms to assert themselves the sooner, whenever confiscation takes place. The more marked the capitalist features in landlord economy, the sooner will democratic confiscation give an impetus to the real struggle for socialism—and, consequently, the more dangerous is false idealisation of the democratic revolution through

use of the catchword of "socialisation". Such is the conclusion to be drawn from the fact that landlord economy is a mixture of capitalism and serf-ownership relations.

Thus, we must combine the purely proletarian struggle with the general peasant struggle, but not confuse the two. We must support the general democratic and general peasant struggle, but not become submerged in this non-class struggle; we must never idealise it with false catchwords such as "socialisation", or ever forget the necessity of organising both the urban *and the rural* proletariat in an entirely independent class party of Social-Democracy. While giving the utmost support to the most determined democratism, that party will not allow itself to be diverted from the revolutionary path by reactionary dreams and experiments in "equalisation" under the system of commodity production. The peasants' struggle against the landlords is now a revolutionary struggle; the confiscation of the landlords' estates at the present stage of economic and political evolution is revolutionary in every respect, and we back this revolutionary-democratic measure. However, to call this measure "socialisation", and to deceive oneself and the people concerning the possibility of "equality" in land tenure under the system of commodity production, is a reactionary petty-bourgeois utopia, which we leave to the socialist-reactionaries.

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## The Proletariat and the Peasantry

The Congress of the Peasant Union now in session in Moscow once again raises the vital question of the attitude of Social-Democrats to the peasant movement. It has always been a vital question for Russian Marxists when determining their programme and tactics. In the very first draft Programme of the Russian Social-Democrats, printed abroad in 1884 by the Emancipation of Labour group, most serious attention was devoted to the peasant question.

Since then there has not been a single major Marxist work dealing with general questions, or a single Social-Democratic periodical, which has not repeated or developed Marxist views and slogans, or applied them to particular cases.

Today the question of the peasant movement has become vital, not only in the theoretical, but also in the most direct practical sense. We now have to transform our general slogans into direct appeals by the revolutionary proletariat to the revolutionary peasantry. The time has now come when the peasantry is coming forward as a conscious maker of a new way of life in Russia. And the course and outcome of the great Russian revolution depend in tremendous measure on the growth of the peasants' political consciousness.

What does the peasantry expect of the revolution? What can the revolution give the peasantry? Anyone active in

the political sphere, and especially every class-conscious worker who goes in for politics, not in the sense vulgarised by bourgeois politicians, but in the best sense of the word, must answer these two questions.

The peasantry wants land and freedom. There can be no two opinions on this score. All class-conscious workers support the revolutionary peasantry with all their might. All class-conscious workers want and are fighting for the peasantry to receive all the land and full freedom. "All the land" means not putting up with any partial concessions and hand-outs; it means reckoning, not on a compromise between the peasantry and the landlords, but on abolition of landed estates. And the party of the class-conscious proletariat, the Social-Democrats, have most vigorously proclaimed this view: at its Third Congress held last May, the R.S.D.L.P. adopted a resolution directly declaring for support of the peasants' revolutionary demands, *including confiscation of all privately-owned estates*. This resolution clearly shows that the party of the class-conscious workers supports the peasants' demand for all the land. And in *this* respect the content of the resolution adopted at the conference of the other half of our Party fully coincides with that of the resolution passed by the Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.

"Full freedom" means election of officials and other office-holders who administer public and state affairs. "Full freedom" means the complete abolition of a state administration that is not wholly and exclusively responsible to the people, that is not elected by, accountable to, and subject to recall by, the people. "Full freedom" means that it is not the people who should be subordinated to officials, but the officials who should be subordinated to the people.

Of course, not all peasants fighting for land and freedom are fully aware of what their struggle implies, and go so far as to demand a republic. But for all that, the democratic trend of the peasants' demands is beyond all doubt.

Hence the peasantry can be certain that the proletariat will support these demands. The peasants must know that the red banner which has been raised in the towns is the banner of struggle for the immediate and vital demands, not only of the industrial and agricultural workers, but also of the millions and tens of millions of small tillers of the soil.

Survivals of serfdom in every possible shape and form are to this day a cruel burden on the whole mass of the peasantry, and the proletarians under their red banner have declared war on this burden.

But the red banner means more than proletarian support of the peasants' demands. It also means the independent demands of the proletariat. It means struggle, not only for land and freedom, but also against all exploitation of man by man, struggle against the poverty of the masses of the people, against the rule of capital. And it is here that we are faced with the second question: what can the revolution give the peasantry? Many sincere friends of the peasants (the Socialist-Revolutionaries, for instance, among them) ignore this question, do not realise its importance. They think it is sufficient to raise and settle the question of what the peasants want, to get the answer: land and freedom. This is a great mistake. Full freedom, election of all officials all the way to the head of the state, will not do away with the rule of capital; will not abolish the wealth of the few and the poverty of the masses. Complete abolition of private landownership, too, will not do away either with the rule of capital or with the poverty of the masses. Even on land belonging to the whole nation, only those with capital of their own, only those who have the implements, livestock, machines, stocks of seed, money in general, etc., will be able to farm independently. As for those who have nothing but their hands to work with, they will inevitably remain slaves of capital even in a democratic republic, even when the land belongs to the whole nation. The idea that "social-

isation" of land can be effected without socialisation of capital, the idea that equalised land tenure is possible while capital and commodity economy exist, is a delusion. In nearly all countries of Europe, socialism has experienced periods when this or some similar delusions have been prevalent. The experience of working-class struggle in all countries has shown in practice how dangerous such an error is, and today the socialist proletarians of Europe and America have completely rid themselves of it.

Thus the red banner of the class-conscious workers means, first, that we support with all our might the peasants' struggle for full freedom and all the land; secondly, it means that we do not stop at this, but go on further. We are waging, besides the struggle for freedom and land, a fight for socialism. The fight for socialism is a fight against the rule of capital. It is being carried on first and foremost by the wage-workers, who are directly and wholly dependent on capital. As for the small farmers, some of them own capital themselves, and often themselves exploit workers. Hence not all small peasants join the ranks of fighters for socialism; only those do so who resolutely and consciously side with the workers against capital, with public property against private property.

That is why the Social-Democrats say they are fighting together with the entire peasantry against the landlords and officials, besides which they—the town and village proletarians together—are fighting against capital. The struggle for land and freedom is a democratic struggle. The struggle to abolish the rule of capital is a socialist struggle.

Let us, then, send our warm greetings to the Peasant Union, which has decided to stand together and fight staunchly, selflessly, and unswervingly for full freedom and for all the land. These peasants are true democrats. We must explain to them patiently and steadily where their views on the tasks of democracy and socialism are wrong, regarding them as allies with whom we are united

by the great common struggle. These peasants are truly revolutionary democrats with whom we must and shall carry on the fight for the complete victory of the present revolution. We are fully in sympathy with the plan to call a general strike and the decision to rise together the next time, with the town workers and all the peasant poor acting in unison. All class-conscious workers will make every effort to help carry out this plan. Yet no alliance, even with the most honest and determined revolutionary democrats, will ever make the proletarians forget their still greater and more important goal, the fight for socialism, for the complete abolition of the rule of capital, for the emancipation of all working people from every kind of exploitation. Forward, workers and peasants, in the common struggle for land and freedom! Forward, proletarians, united by international Social-Democracy, in the fight for socialism!

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## Revision of the Agrarian Programme of the Workers' Party

(Excerpt)

### IV. The Objects of Our Agrarian Programme

The question of the agrarian programme of the R.S.D.L.P. would be very much clearer if we attempted to set it forth in the form of clear and plain advice that the Social-Democratic Party should offer the proletariat and the peasantry in the period of the democratic revolution.

The first advice would necessarily be the following: make every effort to achieve the complete victory of the peasant uprising. Without such a victory, it will be impossible even to talk seriously either about "taking the land" from the landlords, or about setting up a truly democratic state. And the only slogan that can rouse the peasantry to revolt is: confiscation of all the landed estates (and not alienation in general, or expropriation in general, which, would leave the question of compensation in the shade), and definitely confiscation by peasant committees pending the convocation of a constituent assembly.

Any other advice (including Maslov's<sup>38</sup> slogan of "alienation", and all his municipalisation) is a call to the peasantry to settle the question, not by means of insurrection, but by a deal with the landlords, with the reactionary central authority. It is a call for a settlement of the question, not in a revolutionary, but in a bureaucratic way, for even the most democratic regional and Zemstvo organisations are bound to be bureaucratic compared with revolutionary peasant committees, which should settle ac-

counts with the landlords there and then, and take over powers later to be sanctioned by a national constituent assembly.

The second advice would necessarily be: unless the political system is made thoroughly democratic, unless a republic is established and the sovereignty of the people really assured, it will be useless to think either of retaining the gains won by the peasant revolt, or of making further progress. We should formulate this advice to the workers and peasants in the clearest and most precise terms to preclude all doubts, ambiguities, misinterpretations, or the tacit assumption of absurdities such as the possibility of abolishing landed proprietorship under a reactionary central authority. And therefore, in pressing our political advice, we must say to the peasants: after taking the land, you should go further, otherwise you will be beaten and hurled back by the landlords and the big bourgeoisie. You cannot take the land and retain it without achieving new political gains, without striking another and even stronger blow at private ownership of land in general. In politics, as in all the life of society, if you do not push forward, you will be hurled back. Either the bourgeoisie, strengthened after the democratic revolution (which naturally strengthens the bourgeoisie), will rob both the workers and the peasant masses of all their gains, or the proletariat and the peasant masses will fight their way further forward. And that means a republic and the complete sovereignty of the people. It means—if a republic is established—the nationalisation of all the land as the most that a bourgeois-democratic revolution can attain, as the natural and necessary step from the victory of bourgeois democracy to the beginning of the real struggle for socialism.

The third and last advice is: proletarians and semi-proletarians of town and country, organise separately. Don't trust any petty proprietors—not even small, or "working", proprietors. Don't be tempted with small-

scale ownership, so long as commodity production continues. The nearer the peasant uprising is to victory, the more likely is the peasant proprietor to turn against the proletariat, the more necessary is it for the proletariat to have its independent organisation, and the more vigorously, perseveringly, resolutely and loudly should we call for the complete socialist revolution. We stand by the peasant movement to the end; but we have to remember that it is the movement of another class, *not the one* which can and will bring about the socialist revolution. That is why we leave aside the question of what is to be done about distributing the land as an object of economic activity: in bourgeois society, that question can and will be settled only by the proprietors, big and small. What we are mostly (and after the victory of the peasant uprising exclusively) interested in is: what should the rural proletariat do? We have been and will be concerned mainly with this question, leaving it to the ideologists of the petty bourgeoisie to invent such things as equalised land tenure and the like. Our reply to this question, the fundamental question of the new, bourgeois-democratic Russia is: the rural proletariat must organise independently together with the town proletariat to fight for the complete socialist revolution.

Hence our agrarian programme should consist of three main parts. First, the formulation of the most emphatic call for a revolutionary peasant onslaught upon landed proprietorship; secondly, a precise definition of the next step the movement can and should take to consolidate the peasants' gains and to pass from the victory of democracy to the direct proletarian struggle for socialism; third, an indication of the Party's proletarian class aims, which, as the victory of the peasant uprising draws nearer, more urgently confront us and more persistently demand a clear formulation.

Maslov's programme does not solve a single one of the fundamental problems that now confront the R.S.D.L.P.;

it does not give the slogan that could now, immediately, under the present most anti-democratic state, indicate the path of victory for the peasant movement. This programme does not define exactly the political reforms that are necessary to complete and consolidate the agrarian reforms; it does not indicate the agrarian reforms that will be necessary in a complete and consistent democracy; it does not describe the proletarian attitude of our Party towards all bourgeois-democratic reforms. It defines neither the conditions of the "first step" nor the objects of the "second step", but lumps everything together: beginning with the transfer of the crown lands to a non-existent "democratic state", and going on to the transfer of the landed estates to democratic municipalities out of fear of the undemocratic nature of the central authority! Non-revolutionary as regards its present practical significance, based on the assumption of an absolutely artificial and entirely improbable deal with a semi-reactionary central authority, this programme can give no guidance to the workers' party in any of the possible and conceivable lines of development of the democratic revolution in Russia.

To sum up. The only correct programme, provided there is a democratic revolution, is the following: confiscation of the landed estates and the establishment of peasant committees;\* this we must demand immediately,

\* Like X., Maslov "sees a contradiction in the fact that we demand abolition of the social-estates and the establishment of peasant, i.e., social-estate, committees. In fact, the contradiction is only a seeming one: the abolition of the social-estates requires a 'dictatorship' of the lowest, oppressed social-estate, just as the abolition of classes in general, including the class of proletarians, requires the dictatorship of the proletariat. The object of our entire agrarian programme is the eradication of feudal and social-estate traditions in the sphere of agrarian relations, and to bring that about the only possible appeal can be to the lowest social-estate, to those who are oppressed by these remnants of the serf-owning system". Lenin, "Reply to X.", p. 29. (See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, p. 440.—Ed.)

without hedging it round with restricting reservations. Such a demand is revolutionary and advantageous both to the proletariat and to the peasantry in all circumstances, even the worst. Such a demand inevitably involves the collapse of the police state and the strengthening of democracy.

But we cannot limit ourselves to confiscation. In the period of democratic revolution and peasant uprising, we cannot under any circumstances flatly reject nationalisation of the land; but we must specify the particular political conditions without which nationalisation might be detrimental to the proletariat and the peasantry.

Such a programme will be complete and integral. It will unquestionably offer the maximum of what is conceivable in any bourgeois-democratic revolution. It will not tie the hands of the Social-Democrats, for it will allow for division of the land or nationalisation, according to political circumstances. It will under no circumstances cause any friction between the peasants and the proletariat as fighters for democracy.\* It will here and now, under the present political regime of police-ridden autocracy, advance absolutely revolutionary slogans that will revolutionise this regime; and it will also contain further demands, provided the democratic revolution is completely victorious, i.e., provided a situation arises in which the completion of the democratic revolution opens new prospects and brings forward new tasks.

It is absolutely essential that the programme should precisely indicate the special proletarian position we occupy throughout the democratic agrarian revolution. We

\* To remove any idea that the workers' party wants to impose upon the peasantry any scheme of reforms against their will and independently of any movement among the peasantry, we have attached to the draft programme *Variant A*, in which, instead of the direct demand for nationalisation, we say first that the Party supports the striving of the revolutionary peasantry to abolish private ownership of land.

need not be embarrassed by the fact that the place for this is a resolution on tactics, or that it repeats the general part of our programme.

It is worth sacrificing the symmetrical division of subjects into programmatic and tactical, if by doing so we make our position clear and intelligible to the masses.

Herewith we submit the draft agrarian programme drawn up by the majority of the "Agrarian Committee" (appointed by the Joint Central Committee of the R.S.D.L.P. to draft a new agrarian programme).

### V. Draft Agrarian Programme

With a view to eradicating the survivals of the serf-owning system, which are a direct and heavy burden upon the peasants, and for the purpose of facilitating the free development of the class struggle in the countryside, the Party demands:

(1) the confiscation of all church, monastery, crown, state, and landlord estates;

(2) the establishment of peasant committees for the purpose of immediately abolishing all traces of landlord power and privilege, and of actual disposal of the confiscated lands, pending the establishment of a new agrarian system by a constituent assembly of the whole people;

(3) the abolition of all taxes and services at present exacted from the peasantry, as the tax-paying social-estate;

(4) the repeal of all laws that restrict the peasants in disposing of their land;

(5) the authorisation of the courts elected by the people to reduce exorbitant rents and to annul all contracts that entail an element of bondage.

If, however, the decisive victory of the present revolution in Russia brings about the complete sovereignty of the people, i.e., establishes a republic and a fully demo-

cratic state system, the Party will\* seek the abolition of private ownership of land and the transfer of all the land to the whole people as common property.

Furthermore, the object of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in all circumstances, and whatever the situation of democratic agrarian reform, is steadily to strive for the independent class organisation of the rural proletariat; to explain that its interests are irreconcilably opposed to those of the peasant bourgeoisie; to warn it against being tempted by small-scale ownership, which cannot, so long as commodity production exists, abolish poverty among the masses; and lastly, to urge the necessity for a complete socialist revolution as the only means of abolishing all poverty and all exploitation.

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\* Variant A.

...the Party will support the striving of the revolutionary peasantry to abolish private ownership of land and seek the transfer of all the land to the state.



## Speech in Reply to the Debate on the Agrarian Question

Delivered at the Fourth (Unity) Congress  
of the R.S.D.L.P.

I advance two main theses: (1) the peasants will never agree to municipalisation; (2) without a democratic republic, without the fully guaranteed sovereignty of the people and without the election of government officials, municipalisation would be harmful. In developing these theses, I will first deal with the more serious objections raised against nationalisation. Undoubtedly, the most important objection is the one raised by Comrade Plekhanov. Comrade Plekhanov said literally the following. I took down his words: "We cannot under any circumstances be in favour of nationalisation." This is a mistake. I venture to assert that if a peasant revolution is really brought about in Russia, and if the political revolution that will accompany it reaches the point of creating a really democratic republic, Comrade Plekhanov will consider it possible to support nationalisation; and if a democratic republic is really brought about in Russia in the forthcoming revolution, then not only the Russian but the entire international situation of the movement will push things towards nationalisation. But if this condition does not arise, municipalisation will still prove to be a fiction; in those circumstances it can be carried out only as possibly a new form of compensation. Comrade John uses the term alienation instead of confiscation, and, as was evident from his speech, he did not choose this term by chance. Yet it is a purely Cadet term: it can be taken

to mean anything you please, and the compensation scheme proposed by the Cadets fits in with it completely. To go on. "What guarantee is there against restoration?" asked Comrade Plekhanov. I don't think this question has any close and inseparable bearing on the programme we are discussing; but since it has been raised, a definite and unambiguous answer must be given to it. If we mean a real, fully effective, economic guarantee against restoration, that is, a guarantee that would create the economic conditions precluding restoration, then we shall have to say: the only guarantee against restoration is a socialist revolution in the West. There can be no other guarantee in the real and full sense of the term. Without this condition, in whichever other way the problem is solved (municipalisation, division of the land, etc.), restoration will be not only possible, but positively inevitable. I would formulate this proposition as follows: the Russian revolution can achieve victory by its own efforts, but it cannot possibly hold and consolidate its gains by its own strength. It cannot do this unless there is a socialist revolution in the West. Without this condition restoration is inevitable, whether we have municipalisation, or nationalisation, or division of the land: for under each and every form of possession and property the small proprietor will always be a bulwark of restoration. After the complete victory of the democratic revolution the small proprietor will inevitably turn against the proletariat; and the sooner the common enemies of the proletariat and of the small proprietors, such as the capitalists, the landlords, the financial bourgeoisie, and so forth are overthrown, the sooner will this happen. Our democratic republic has no other reserve than the socialist proletariat in the West. And in this connection we must not lose sight of the fact that the classical bourgeois revolution in Europe, namely, the great French Revolution of the eighteenth century, took place in an international situation that was entirely different from the one in which the Russian revolution is

taking place. France at the end of the eighteenth century was surrounded by feudal and semi-feudal states. Russia in the twentieth century, accomplishing her bourgeois revolution, is surrounded by countries in which the socialist proletariat stands fully prepared on the eve of the final battle with the bourgeoisie. If such relatively insignificant events as the tsar's promise of freedom in Russia on October 17 gave the powerful impetus it did to the proletarian movement in Western Europe, if a telegram from St. Petersburg announcing the issue of the notorious Constitutional Manifesto was sufficient to make the Austrian workers pour into the streets, to lead to a number of demonstrations and collisions with the troops in the largest industrial towns of Austria, you can imagine what the international socialist proletariat will do when it receives news from Russia, not of promises of freedom, but of its actual achievement, and the complete victory of the revolutionary peasantry. If, however, the question of a guarantee against restoration is put on a different basis, that is, if we mean a conditional and relative guarantee against restoration, then we shall have to say: the only conditional and relative guarantee against restoration is that the revolution should be effected in the most drastic manner possible, effected by the revolutionary class directly, with the least possible participation of go-betweens, compromisers, and all sorts of conciliators; that this revolution should really be carried to the end. In this respect, my draft provides the maximum as regards guarantees against restoration.

My draft proposes the formation of peasant committees as the direct levers of the revolutionary peasant movement, and as the most desirable form of that movement. Translated into simple language, peasant committees mean calling upon the peasants to set to work immediately and directly to settle accounts with the government officials and the landlords in the most drastic manner. Peasant committees mean calling upon the people who

are being oppressed by the survivals of serfdom and the police regime to eradicate these survivals "in a plebeian manner",<sup>39</sup> as Marx put it. Comrade Plekhanov thinks that this premise of a revolution carried to the end, of a revolution which introduces the election of government officials by the people, is reminiscent of anarchism, which is abhorrent to him, just as to all of us, of course. But it is extremely strange that the question of the people electing the government officials should remind anyone of anarchism, or should, at a time like the present, bring a smile to the lips of any Social-Democrat, except Bernstein, perhaps. It is at the present time that this slogan—the election of government officials by the people—assumes direct and immense practical significance. All our activity, our propaganda, and agitation among the masses of the peasantry should consist largely in propagating, spreading, and explaining this slogan. To advocate a peasant revolution, to speak of an agrarian revolution at all seriously, and at the same time to say nothing about the need for real democracy, which, among other things, includes the election of government officials by the people, is a crying contradiction. This reproach about anarchism in this connection only reminds me of the German Bernsteinians who not long ago, in controversy with Kautsky, accused him of advocating anarchism.

We must plainly and definitely say to the peasants: if you want to carry the agrarian revolution to the end, you must also carry the political revolution to the end; for unless the political revolution is carried to the end there will be no durable agrarian revolution, and perhaps none at all. Without a complete democratic revolution, without the election of government officials by the people, we shall have either peasant disturbances, or Cadet agrarian reforms. We shall not have what would deserve the lofty title used by Plekhanov—a peasant revolution. To go on. Municipalisation provides a wide arena for the class struggle, said Plekhanov. I have tried to use his own

words as nearly as possible, and I must say emphatically that what he says is definitely *wrong*. It is wrong both in the political and in the economic sense. Other things being equal, a municipality and municipal landownership undoubtedly allow a narrower arena for the class struggle than the whole nation, and the nationalisation of the land. In a democratic republic, nationalisation of the land would undoubtedly provide the widest field for the class struggle—the widest field possible and thinkable under capitalism. Nationalisation means the abolition of absolute rent, a reduction in the price of grain, the maximum freedom for competition and the free penetration of capital into agriculture. Municipalisation, on the contrary, narrows the field of the nation-wide class struggle, for it does not free all production relations in agriculture from absolute rent, and it cuts up our general demands into particular demands. At all events, municipalisation obscures the class struggle. From this point of view, only one answer can be given to Comrade Plekhanov's question. From this point of view municipalisation does not hold water. Municipalisation means narrowing and obscuring the class struggle.

Plekhanov's next objection concerns the question of seizing power. He perceives in my draft of the agrarian programme the idea of seizing power. I must admit that my draft does, indeed, contain the idea of the seizure of power by the revolutionary peasantry; but it is a great mistake to put this on a par with the Narodnaya Volya<sup>40</sup> idea of seizing power. In the 1870s and 1880s, when the idea of seizing power was fostered by the Narodnaya Volya, the latter consisted of a group of intellectuals, and there was no really mass revolutionary movement of any extent to speak of. Seizure of power was the desire, or the phrase of a handful of intellectuals, but not the inevitable next step of an already developing mass movement. Now, after October, November, and December 1905,<sup>41</sup> after the broad masses of the working class, the semi-

proletarian elements, and the peasantry have shown the world forms of the revolutionary movement such as have not been witnessed for a long time; after we have had the struggle of the revolutionary people for power flaring up in Moscow, in the South and in the Baltic Provinces, to put the idea of the revolutionary people winning political power on a par with the ideas of the Narodnaya Volya means being fully twenty-five years behind the times, means striking out a whole vast period of Russian history. Plekhanov said we must not be afraid of an agrarian revolution. But this fear that the revolutionary peasantry will win power is fear of an agrarian revolution. Agrarian revolution is an empty phrase if its victory does not presuppose the winning of power by the revolutionary people. Without this latter condition, it will not be an agrarian revolution but a peasant revolt, or a Cadet agrarian reform.<sup>42</sup> In concluding the examination of this point, I should like to remind you that even the resolution of the comrades of the Minority, published in the second issue of *Partiinnye Izvestia*, says that we are already being confronted with the task of wresting power from the government.

Comrade Plekhanov thinks that the expression "the creative activity of the people", which I don't think you will find in our resolutions, but which, if we are to trust Comrade Plekhanov's memory, I used in my speech, is reminiscent of old acquaintances—the Narodnaya Volya and the Socialist-Revolutionaries. I think that this recollection of Comrade Plekhanov's is also twenty-five years behind the times. Recall what happened in Russia in the last quarter of 1905—strikes, Soviets of Workers' Deputies, insurrections, peasant committees, railwaymen's committees, and so forth. All this shows that the popular movement was passing into the form of insurrection, and these bodies were undoubtedly rudimentary organs of revolutionary authority. And what I said about the creative activity of the people had a very definite and concrete

meaning: it referred precisely to these historic days of the Russian revolution, and it characterised this method of fighting not only against the old regime, but by means of a revolutionary authority, a method employed for the first time by the broad masses of the Russian workers and peasants in the famous October and December days. If our revolution has been buried, then so have these rudimentary forms of the revolutionary authority of the peasants and workers. But if your reference to a peasant revolution is not a mere phrase, if we have a real agrarian revolution in the true sense of the word, then we shall undoubtedly see a repetition of the October and December events on a much greater scale. A revolutionary authority, not of intellectuals, not of a group of conspirators, but of the workers and peasants, has already existed in Russia, has already been put into effect in the course of our revolution. It was crushed by the triumph of reaction; but if there are real grounds for our conviction that the revolution will revive, then we must also anticipate the inevitable revival, development, and success of new organs of revolutionary authority that will be even more resolute and more closely connected with the peasantry and the proletariat than the preceding ones. Hence, by raising this battered and ridiculous bogey of the *Narodnaya Volya*, Plekhanov has merely dodged the task of analysing the October and December forms of the movement.

Lastly, let us examine the question whether my programme is flexible and "well shod on all four hoofs". I think that in this respect, too, my agrarian programme is more satisfactory than all the others. What if things go badly with the revolution? What if it turns out to be impossible to carry through to the end our democratic revolution unless all the "ifs" I have put in my draft are met? In that case, we shall certainly have to reckon with the conditions of peasant farming and of peasant land tenure that already exist. In this connection I will men-

tion the extremely important factor of rented land. If we can conceive of things going badly with the revolution, of it not being carried through to the end, we must undoubtedly reckon with the existence and persistence of this factor. And in my draft, the Party's tasks in the event of this worst contingency arising, in the event of all the allegedly utopian "ifs" being absent, are formulated more fully, more precisely, and much more soberly than in Comrade Maslov's draft. Thus my programme provides practical slogans both for the present conditions of peasant farming and peasant land tenure, and for the contingency that capitalism will have the best possible prospects of development. Comrade John tried to be witty and said that my programme contains too many programmes, that it provides for both confiscation and the renting of land, and that the one precludes the other. But his joke fell flat, because confiscation of the landed estates does not preclude the renting of land: this takes place on the peasants' land as well. Hence Comrade Plekhanov was particularly wrong when he advanced his particularly slashing argument against me. He implied that it was easy to draw up a programme for the contingency that everything will go off splendidly. Anybody can draw up a programme like that; but try to draw up a programme for the contingency that the best conditions don't exist. In answer to this argument, I assert that it is precisely having in view the contingency of the worst possible course or outcome of our revolution that my programme is particularly realistic and particularly "well shod", for it speaks of the confiscation of the landed estates and makes provision for questions such as that of renting land. But Comrade John's draft, which says nothing about these worst conditions, that is, about the absence of complete political democracy, merely provides for municipalisation; and municipalisation without the election of government officials by the people, without the abolition of the standing army, and so forth, is as dangerous

as nationalisation, and even more so. That is why I insist on retaining all the "ifs" that Plekhanov has so unjustly condemned.

And so, the peasants will not accept municipalisation. Comrade Kartvelov said that in the Caucasus the peasants are fully in agreement with the Socialist-Revolutionaries, but they ask whether they will have the right to sell the land they obtain as a result of division, or of socialisation. Quite right, Comrade Kartvelov! Your observations fully coincide with the peasants' interests in general, and with the peasants' conception of their interests. But it is precisely because the peasants regard every agrarian reform from the point of view of whether they will have the right to sell the extra land they obtain that they will undoubtedly be opposed to municipalisation, or Zemstvoisation. The peasants still confuse the Zemstvo with the rural superintendent, and they have much more reason to do so than is assumed by the baughty Cadet professors of law who scoff at the ignorance of the peasants. That is why, before speaking about municipalisation, it is necessary, absolutely necessary, to speak about the election of government officials by the people. At present, however, until this democratic demand is carried out, it is appropriate to speak only of confiscation in general, or of division of the land. That is why, to simplify matters for the Congress on this fundamental question, I propose the following: as Comrade Borisov's programme has a number of features in common with mine and is based on the principle of division and not of nationalisation, I withdraw my programme and leave it to the Congress to express its opinion on the question of division or municipalisation. If you reject division—or perhaps it would be more correct to say "when" you reject division—I, of course, shall have to withdraw my draft for good, as hopeless. If, however, you accept division, I will submit my programme in its entirety as an amendment to Comrade Borisov's draft. I would also remind you, in reply to the reproach

that I want to foist nationalisation on the peasants, that my programme contains "*Variant A*", which expressly speaks of removing any idea of foisting anything upon the peasants against their will. Hence the substitution of Borisov's draft for mine in the preliminary voting will not affect the substance of the matter in the least, and will only make it easier and simpler for us to ascertain what the Congress really wants. In my opinion, municipalisation is wrong and harmful; division is wrong, but not harmful.

I will refer briefly to the difference between the two. The "divisionists" rightly interpret the facts, but they have forgotten what Marx said about the old materialism: "The materialists interpreted the world; the point, however, is not only to interpret the world, but to change it."<sup>43</sup> The peasant says: "The land is God's, the land is the people's, the land is nobody's." The "divisionists" tell us that the peasant says this without realising what he is saying; that he says one thing and means another. All that the peasants are really striving for, they tell us, is additional land; they want to enlarge their small farms, and no more. All this is quite true. But our disagreement with the "divisionists" does not end here, it only begins. We must use what the peasants say, even if it is economically unsound or meaningless, as a hook for our propaganda. We must say to them: You say that everybody ought to have the right to use the land? You want to transfer the land to the people? Excellent! But what does transferring the land to the people mean? Who controls the people's wealth and the people's property? The government officials, the Trepovs.<sup>44</sup> Do you want to transfer the land to Trepov and to the government officials? No. Every peasant will say that it is not to them that he wants to transfer the land. Do you want to transfer the land to the Petrunkeviches and Rodichevs,<sup>45</sup> who, perhaps, will sit on the municipal councils? No. The peasant will certainly not want to transfer the land to these gentlemen. Hence—we will

explain to the peasants—if the land is to be transferred to the whole people in a way that will benefit the peasants, it is necessary to ensure that all government officials without exception are elected by the people. Hence my proposal for nationalisation, with the proviso that a democratic republic is fully guaranteed, suggests the right line of conduct to our propagandists and agitators; for it clearly and vividly shows them that discussion of the agrarian demands of the peasantry should serve as a basis for political propaganda in general, and for propaganda in favour of a republic in particular. For example, the peasant Mishin, who was elected to the Duma<sup>46</sup> by the Stavropol peasants, brought with him an instruction from his electors which has been published in full in *Russkoye Gosudarstvo*. In this instruction, the peasants demand the abolition of Zemstvo officials, the erection of elevators, and the transfer of all the land to the state. This last demand is undoubtedly a reactionary prejudice, for in constitutional Russia today and tomorrow the state is and will be a police and military despotism. But we must not simply reject this demand as a harmful prejudice; we must “hook on” to it in order to explain to Mishin and his like how things really stand. We must tell Mishin and his like that the demand for the transfer of the land to the state expresses, although very badly, an idea that is extremely important and useful for the peasants. The transfer of the land to the state can and will be very useful for the peasants only when the state becomes a fully democratic republic, when all government officials are elected by the people, when the standing army is abolished, and so forth. For all these reasons I think that if you reject nationalisation, you will cause our practical workers, our propagandists and agitators, to make the same mistakes as we brought about by our mistaken demand for restitution of the cut-off lands in our programme of 1903. Just as our demand for the restitution of the cut-off lands was interpreted in a narrower sense than it

was meant by its authors, so now rejection of nationalisation and its replacement by the demand for division, to say nothing of the utterly confused demand for municipalisation, will inevitably lead to so many mistakes by our practical workers, our propagandists and agitators, that very soon we shall regret having adopted the “division” or the municipalisation programme.

I will conclude by repeating my two main theses: first, the peasants will never agree to municipalisation; secondly, without a democratic republic, without the election of government officials by the people, municipalisation would be harmful.

*Minutes of the Unity  
Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.  
Held in Stockholm in 1906,  
Moscow, 1907*

*Collected Works.  
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### The Land Question in the Duma

The Cadet's first move in the Duma was to draw up an address in reply to the address from the throne. Instead of a demand, they drew up a timid request. Their second "move" was silently to pass to the order of the day when their request that a deputation be received to present the Address was rejected. This time they behaved still more timidly. Now comes the third move—the debate on the land question, which has been included in the business of the Duma.

All workers should pay particular attention to this question. The land question is the one that is most of all worrying the masses of the peasants; and the peasants have now become the principal and almost the sole allies of the workers in the revolution. The land question will show better than anything else whether the Cadets, who call themselves the party of people's freedom, are loyally serving the cause of people's freedom.

What do the people, i.e., primarily the peasantry, want? The peasants want the land. Everybody knows that. The peasants are demanding that all the land in the country should belong to them. They want to throw off the tyranny of the landlords and the bureaucrats. They want to take the land from the landlords so that the latter may no longer impose labour-service upon them, which is virtually the old *corvée*; and they want to take power away from the bureaucrats, to prevent them from lording it any longer over the common people. The workers must help the

peasants in their fight for the land, and also must help them to formulate the land question in straightforward, clear, and definite terms.

It is particularly easy to confuse and obscure the land question. It is easy to argue that, of course, land must be allotted to the peasants, and then to hedge this allotting of land around with such conditions as will make it quite useless for the peasants. If the government officials do the allotting again, if the liberal landlords are again appointed as "civil mediators", and if the old autocratic government determines the "modest dimensions" of the compensation to be paid, then the peasants, instead of deriving any benefit, will be swindled as they were in 1861, and there will only be another noose around their necks. Therefore the class-conscious workers must most vigorously explain to the peasants that on the question of the land they should be particularly cautious and distrustful. As matters stand today, the question of compensation, and the question of which authority is to "allot" the land, are of the greatest importance. The question of compensation will serve as an immediate and infallible test of who stands for the peasants and who for the landlords, and also who is trying to desert from one side to the other. The Russian peasant knows—ah, how well he knows!—what compensation means. On this question, the divergence of interests of the peasants and the landlords is splendidly revealed. And the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. was therefore quite right in substituting the word "confiscation" (i.e., alienation without compensation) for the word "alienation" in the original draft of the agrarian programme.

On the question of which authority is to allot the land, the interests of the peasants and the government officials diverge as sharply as do those of the peasants and the landlords on the question of compensation. The socialist workers must therefore show especial perseverance in explaining to the peasants how important it is that the



land question should not be handled by the old authorities. Let the peasants know that no agrarian reform whatever will be of any use if it is handled by the old authorities. Happily, on this question too, agreement was reached at the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. as regards the substance of the matter, for the Congress resolution unreservedly recognised the necessity of supporting the revolutionary actions of the peasantry. True, the Congress in our opinion made a mistake by not stating plainly that the land reform can be entrusted only to a *fully* democratic state, only to government officials who are elected by, accountable to, and subject to recall by, the people. But we intend to deal with this point in greater detail on another occasion.

In the Duma, two main agrarian programmes will be proposed. The Cadets, who predominate in the Duma, want the landlords to have their own way without harm to the peasants. They agree to the compulsory alienation of a large part of the landed estates, but first, they stipulate compensation, and secondly, they want a liberal-bureaucratic and not a revolutionary-peasant settlement of the question of the ways and means of carrying out the agrarian reform. In their agrarian programme the Cadets, as always, wriggle like eels between the landlords and the peasants, between the old authorities and people's freedom.

The Trudovik, or Peasant, Group<sup>47</sup> has not yet definitely formulated its agrarian programme. It urges that all the land must belong to the working people; but for the time being it says nothing about compensation, or about the question of the old authorities. We shall have more than one occasion to discuss this programme when it is definitely formulated.

The bureaucratic government, of course, refuses to consider even a Cadet agrarian reform. The bureaucratic government, which is headed by some of the richest landlord-bureaucrats, many of them owning tens of thousands of dessiatines of land each, "would sooner accept the

Mohammedan faith" (as a certain writer wittily expressed it) than agree to the compulsory alienation of the landed estates. Thus the "*settlement*" of the agrarian question by the Duma will not be a settlement in the true sense of the term, but only a proclamation, only a declaration of demands. In the case of the Cadets, we shall again hear timid requests instead of the proud and bold, honest and open demands befitting representatives of the people. Let us hope that at least on this occasion the Trudovik Group will come out quite independently of the Cadets.

As for the socialist workers, they now have a particularly important duty to fulfil. In all ways and with all their strength they should enlarge their organisation in general, and their contacts with the peasantry in particular. They should explain to the peasants—as widely, clearly, minutely and circumstantially as possible—the significance of the question of compensation and of whether they can put up with leaving the agrarian reform in the hands of the old authorities. They must strain every nerve to strengthen and enlarge the alliance between the socialist proletariat and the revolutionary peasantry, in preparation for the inevitable climax of the present political crisis. This alliance is the only earnest that the question of "all the land" for the peasants, and of full freedom and complete power for the people, will be effectively settled.

*Volna* No. 15, May 12, 1906

*Collected Works,*  
Vol. 10, pp. 414-17

### The Land Question and the Fight for Freedom

The Duma is discussing the land question. Two main proposals are offered for the solution of this problem: one advocated by the Cadets, and the other advocated by the "Trudoviks", i.e., the peasant deputies.

Concerning these solutions the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. quite rightly said in its resolution on the attitude to be taken towards the peasant movement: "The bourgeois parties are trying to utilise the peasant movement and to bring it under their control—one (the Socialist-Revolutionaries) in pursuit of their object of utopian petty-bourgeois socialism, and the other (the Cadets) with an eye to preserving, in some measure, large-scale private landownership and, at the same time, to weakening the revolutionary movement by satisfying the property instincts of the peasantry with partial concession."

Let us see what this resolution of the Social-Democratic Congress means. The Cadet Party is a semi-landlord party. Many liberal landlords belong to it. It strives to protect the interests of the landlords and agrees only to such *concessions* to the peasantry as are inevitable. The Cadets are striving as far as possible to protect large-scale private landownership and are opposed to complete alienation of all the landed estates for the benefit of the peasantry. The object of their proposal that the peasants should pay compensation for the land, i.e., should *buy* the

land from the landlords through the state, is to transform the upper sections of the peasantry into a "party of order".<sup>48</sup> In fact, no matter how this compensation is arranged, no matter how "fair" a price may be fixed for the land, compensation will be an easier matter for the well-to-do peasants and will fall as a heavy burden upon the poorer peasantry. No matter what regulations may be drawn up on paper providing for purchase by the village commune, etc., the land will in practice remain inevitably in the hands of those who are able to pay for it. Hence the compensation scheme will strengthen the rich peasants at the expense of the poor; it will disunite the peasantry and thereby weaken its struggle for complete freedom and for all the land. The compensation scheme is a *bait* held out to the more prosperous section of the peasantry to induce it to *desert* the cause of freedom and to go over to the side of the *old authorities*. Paying compensation for the land means paying ransom to be freed from the struggle for freedom; it means bribing a section of the fighters for freedom to desert to the enemies of freedom. The well-to-do peasant who pays compensation money for his land will become a small landlord, and it will be very easy for him to desert to the side of the old landlord and bureaucratic authorities and remain there.

Hence the resolution of the Social-Democratic Congress is quite right when it says that the Cadet Party (this semi-landlord party) advocates measures that will *weaken* the revolutionary movement, i.e., the struggle for freedom.

Now let us examine the solution of the land problem proposed by the "Trudovik", or peasant, deputies in the Duma. They have not quite cleared up their views as yet. They stand midway: between the Cadets and the "rustics" (Popular Socialist Party), between compensation for part of the land (the Cadets' proposal) and confiscation of all the land (proposed by the Socialist-Revolutionaries); but they are steadily moving away from the Cadets and drawing nearer to the "rustics".

Is the resolution of the Social-Democratic Congress right in describing the "rustics" as a bourgeois party, whose objects are those of utopian petty-bourgeois socialism?

Let us take the very latest Land Reform Bill<sup>49</sup> proposed by the "rustics" and published in yesterday's issue of their *Narodny Vestnik* (No. 9). This Bill provides for the complete abolition of all private landownership and for "universal and equalised land tenure". Why do the "rustics" want to introduce equalised land tenure? Because they want to abolish the distinction between rich and poor. This is a socialist aim. All socialists want this. But there are different kinds of socialism; there is even clerical socialism; there is petty-bourgeois socialism, and there is proletarian socialism.

Petty-bourgeois socialism expresses the dream of the small proprietor of how to abolish the distinction between rich and poor. Petty-bourgeois socialism assumes that it is possible for all to become "equalised" proprietors, neither poor nor rich; and so the petty-bourgeois socialists draft Bills providing for universal and equalised land tenure. But in reality, poverty and want cannot be abolished in the way the small proprietor wants to do it. Equalised use of the land is impossible so long as the rule of money, the rule of capital, exists. No laws on earth can abolish inequality and exploitation so long as production for the market continues, and so long as there is the rule of money and the power of capital. Exploitation can be completely abolished only when all the land, factories, and tools are transferred to the working class, and when large-scale socialised and planned production is organised. That is why proletarian socialism (Marxism) shows that all the hopes of petty-bourgeois socialism of the possibility of "equalised" small-scale production, or even of the possibility of preserving small-scale production at all under capitalism, are groundless.

The class-conscious proletariat fully supports the peasant struggle for all the land and for complete freedom: hut

it warns the peasants against all false hopes. The peasants can, with the aid of the proletariat, completely throw off the tyranny of the landlords, they can completely put an end to landed proprietorship and to the bureaucratic state of the landlords. The peasants may even abolish all private ownership of land. All such measures will greatly benefit the peasants, the working class, and the whole people. It is in the interests of the working class to render the utmost assistance to the peasants' struggle. But the overthrow of the power of the landlords and the bureaucrats, however complete, will not in itself undermine the power of capital. And only in a society freed from the rule of the landlords and bureaucrats will the last great struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, the fight for a socialist system, be fought out.

That is why the Social-Democrats fight so resolutely against the treacherous programme of the Cadets, and warn the peasants against harbouring false hopes about "equalisation". To achieve success in the present struggle for land and freedom, the peasants must be entirely self-reliant and independent of the Cadets. They should not be misled by the discussion of all sorts of land reform Bills. As long as power remains in the hands of the old autocratic, landlord and bureaucratic government, it will be a waste of time to discuss these proposals for "labour norms", "equalisation", etc. The peasants' struggle for the land will only be weakened by this jumble of clauses and regulations in the various Bills, which the old authorities will either throw out or else transform into new instruments for deceiving the peasantry. "Land Reform Bills" will not help the peasants to understand how to obtain the land: if anything, they will make it more difficult. They merely clutter up the question of the power of the old bureaucratic government with petty and trivial legalistic crotchets. They merely muddle heads with hopes of the coming of good, kind government officials, when as a matter of fact the old savage officials retain all their un-

limited power of violence. Drop this playing with paper "Land Reform Bills", gentlemen. The peasants will settle the land question easily enough as soon as the obstacle of the old authorities is swept away. Better devote all your attention to the peasants' struggle for the complete removal of all such obstacles.

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## The Agrarian Question and the Forces of the Revolution

The newspaper *Trudovoi Narod*, organ of the Trudoviks and members of the Peasant Union, has defined the alignment of forces in the Duma on the land question, that "life or death question" for the peasantry.

"The Trudoviks (100), Popular Socialists (14), and Socialist-Revolutionaries (34), 148 in all, may act together on the land question, to uphold the interests of the working people. Assuming that the Social-Democrats (64) will join them on many points of that question, the total will be 212.

"All these will be opposed by the Constitutional-Democrats (91), the Polish Kolo<sup>50</sup> (46), Independents (52), Octobrists and Moderates (32), 221 in all.

"Thus there is a preponderance of votes against. And we have counted neither the Moslems (30) nor the Cossacks (17); it is likely that, at the very best, one half will side with the Left, and the other half with the Right. In any case there are more votes against the Trudoviks' land law than for it."

The enumeration omits the monarchists (22), but their inclusion only bears out the inference drawn by the Trudoviks.

This conclusion is of interest in two respects: firstly, it throws light on the fundamental question of the alignment of social forces in the present Russian revolution, and secondly, it helps to clarify the significance, for the liberation movement, of the Duma and the struggle in the Duma.

All Social-Democrats are convinced that, in its social and economic content, the present revolution is a *bourgeois*

revolution. This means that it is proceeding on the basis of capitalist production relations, and will inevitably result in a further development of those same production relations. To put it more simply, the entire economy of society will still *remain* under the domination of the market, of money, even when there is the broadest *freedom* and the peasants have won a complete victory in their struggle for the *land*. The struggle for land and freedom is a struggle for the conditions of existence of bourgeois society, for the rule of *capital* will remain in the most democratic republic, irrespective of how the transfer of "all the land to the people" is effected.

Such a view may seem strange to anyone unfamiliar with Marx's theory. Yet it is not hard to see that it is the correct view—one need but recall the great French Revolution and its outcome, the history of the "free lands" in America,<sup>51</sup> and so on.

The Social-Democrats by no means wish to minimise the tasks of the present revolution, or to belittle its significance, by calling it a bourgeois revolution. On the contrary. The struggle of the working class against the capitalist class cannot develop on a wide enough scale and end in victory until the older historical enemies of the proletariat are overthrown.

Hence, the principal task of the proletariat at present is to win the broadest freedom and bring about the most complete destruction of landlord (feudal) landed proprietorship. Only by doing this, only by completely smashing the old, semi-feudal society through democratic action, can the proletariat rise to full stature as an independent class, lay full emphasis on its specific (i.e., socialist) tasks, as distinct from the democratic tasks common to "all the oppressed", and secure for itself the most favourable conditions for an unrestricted, sweeping, and intensified struggle for socialism. If the bourgeois-democratic liberation movement stops half-way, if it is not carried through, the proletariat will have to spend a great

deal more of its forces on general democratic (i.e., bourgeois-democratic) tasks than on its own class, proletarian, i.e., socialist, tasks.

But can the socialist proletariat accomplish the bourgeois revolution independently and as the guiding force? Does not the very concept "bourgeois revolution" imply that it can be accomplished only by the bourgeoisie?

The Mensheviks often fall into this error, although, as a viewpoint, it is a caricature of Marxism. A liberation movement that is bourgeois in social and economic content is not such because of its motive forces. The motive force may be, not the bourgeoisie, but the proletariat and the peasantry. Why is this possible? Because the proletariat and the peasantry suffer even more than the bourgeoisie from the survivals of serfdom, because they are in greater need of freedom and the abolition of landlord oppression. For the bourgeoisie, on the contrary, complete victory constitutes a danger, since the proletariat will make use of full freedom against the bourgeoisie, and the fuller that freedom and the more completely the power of the landlords has been destroyed, the easier will it be for the proletariat to do so.

Hence the bourgeoisie strives to put an end to the bourgeois revolution half-way from its destination, when freedom has been only half-won, by a deal with the old authorities and the landlords. This striving is grounded in the class interests of the bourgeoisie. It was manifested so clearly in the German bourgeois revolution of 1848 that the Communist Marx spearheaded proletarian policy against the "compromising" (the expression is Marx's) liberal bourgeoisie.

Our Russian bourgeoisie is still more cowardly, and our proletariat far more class-conscious and better organised than was the German proletariat in 1848. In our country the full victory of the bourgeois-democratic movement is possible only despite the "compromising" liberal bourgeoisie, only in the event of the mass of the democratic

peasantry following the proletariat in the struggle for full freedom and all the land.

The Second Duma offers still more striking confirmation of this view. Even the peasants have now realised that the liberal bourgeoisie, the Constitutional-Democrats, belong to the Right, and the peasants and the workers to the Left. True, the Trudoviks, Popular Socialists,<sup>52</sup> and Socialist-Revolutionaries constantly vacillate between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and as often as not are in reality political *hangers-on* of the liberals (the voting for Golovin, the "tactics of silence", agreement to refer the budget to a commission, etc., etc.<sup>53</sup>). This vacillation is not accidental. It springs from the class nature of the petty bourgeoisie.

Why must the Constitutional-Democrats be included among the Rights in a question as pressing as that of the land? Because the Constitutional-Democrat agrarian policy is essentially a *landlord* policy. The "compulsory alienation" advocated by the Constitutional-Democrats actually means *the landlords compelling the peasants to pay ruinous compensation*, for in fact both the amount of these payments and rates of taxation *are determined by the landlords*; the landlords and officials will constitute the majority in the local land committees (in the First Duma the Constitutional-Democrats were opposed to the election of these committees by universal ballot), and in the central all-Russia legislature the landlords will be predominant through the Council of State, etc. Cadet "liberalism" is the liberalism of the bourgeois lawyer who *reconciles* the peasant with the landlord, and does that *to the advantage of the landlord*.\*

\* In view of what *Rech* said about the landlord affiliation of the Constitutional-Democrats being only a platform catchword, we must add this: we estimated 79 unmistakable Constitutional-Democrats from the well-known book *Members of the Second State Duma* (St. Petersburg, 1907); of these 20 are landlords. We can name Tushkov, Boguslavsky, Biglov, Bakunin, Rodichev, Bogdanov, Sa-

Take the second question. The Constitutional-Democrats and the Rights constitute a majority in the Duma. "*What is the way out?*", asks *Trudovoi Narod*. The answer is simple: the "way out" is to rise above Duma discussions which lead nowhere.

This would be necessary even if the Left had a majority in the Duma, for the Duma is powerless, and the Council of State would, in the interests of the landlords, "*improve*" any project passed by the Duma. And it is necessary now—not from any subjective party viewpoint, but in the objective historical sense; *unless this is done*, the land question can be settled *only* in favour of the landlords.

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lazkin, Talarinov, Stakhovich, Ikonnikov, Savelyev, Dolgorukov, Chelnokov, Golovin, both Pereleshins, Volotsky, Iordansky, Chernov, svitov. The underlined are Marshals of the Nobility, Rural Superintendents or chairmen of Zemstvo Boards.

## The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the First Russian Revolution 1905-1907

(Excerpt)

### Conclusion

The agrarian question is the basis of the bourgeois revolution in Russia and determines the specific national character of this revolution.

The essence of this question is the struggle of the peasantry to abolish landed proprietorship and the survivals of serfdom in the agricultural system of Russia, and, consequently, also in all her social and political institutions.

Ten and a half million peasant households in European Russia own 75,000,000 dessiatines of land. Thirty thousand, chiefly noble, but partly also upstart, landlords each own over 500 dessiatines—altogether 70,000,000 dessiatines. Such is the main background of the picture. Such are the main reasons for the predominance of feudal landlords in the agricultural system of Russia and, consequently, in the Russian state generally, and in the whole of Russian life. The owners of the latifundia are feudal landlords in the economic sense of the term: the basis of their landownership was created by the history of serfdom, by the history of land-grabbing by the nobility through the centuries. The basis of their present methods of farming is the labour-service system, i.e., a direct survival of the corvée, cultivation of the land with the implements of the peasants and by the virtual enslavement of the small tillers in an endless variety of ways: winter hiring, annual leases, half-share *métayage*, leases based on labour rent, bondage for debt, bondage for cut-off lands, for the

use of forests, meadows, water, and so on and so forth, *ad infinitum*. Capitalist development in Russia has made such strides during the last half-century that the preservation of serfdom in agriculture has become *absolutely* impossible, and its abolition has assumed the forms of a violent crisis, of a nation-wide revolution. But the abolition of serfdom in a bourgeois country is possible in two ways.

Serfdom may be abolished by the feudal-landlord economies slowly evolving into Junker-bourgeois economies, by the mass of the peasants being turned into landless husbandmen and Knechts, by forcibly keeping the masses down to a pauper standard of living, by the rise of small groups of Grossbauern, of rich bourgeois peasants, who inevitably spring up under capitalism from among the peasantry. That is the path that the Black-Hundred landlords, and Stolypin,<sup>54</sup> their minister, have chosen. They have realised that the path for the development of Russia *cannot* be cleared unless the rusty medieval forms of landownership are forcibly broken up. And they have boldly set out to break them up *in the interests of the landlords*. They have thrown overboard the sympathy for the semi-feudal village commune which until recently was widespread among the bureaucracy and the landlords. They have evaded all the "constitutional" laws in order to break up the village communes by force. They have given the kulaks *carte blanche* to rob the peasant masses, to break up the old system of landownership, to ruin thousands of peasant farms; they have handed over the medieval village to be "sacked and plundered" by the possessors of money. They *cannot* act otherwise if they are to preserve their class rule, for they have realised the necessity of adapting themselves to capitalist development and not fighting against it. And in order to preserve their rule they can find no other allies *against* the mass of the peasants than the "upstarts", the Razuvayevs and Kolupayevs. They have no alternative but to shout to these Kolupayevs<sup>55</sup>:



*Enrichessez-vous!*—enrich yourselves! We shall make it possible for you to gain a hundred rubles for every ruble, if you will help us to save the basis of our rule under the new conditions. That path of development, if it is to be pursued successfully, calls for wholesale, systematic, unbridled *violence* against the peasant masses and against the proletariat. And the landlord counter-revolution is hastening to organise that violence all along the line.

The other path of development we have called the American path of development of capitalism, in contrast to the former, the Prussian path. It, too, involves the forcible break-up of the old system of landownership; only the obtuse philistines of Russian liberalism can dream of the possibility of a painless, peaceful outcome of the exceedingly acute crisis in Russia.

But this essential and inevitable break-up may be carried out in the interests of the peasant masses and not of the landlord gang. A mass of free farmers may serve as a basis for the development of capitalism without any landlord economy whatsoever, since, *taken as a whole*, the latter form of economy is economically reactionary, whereas the elements of free farming have been *created* among the peasantry by the preceding economic history of the country. Capitalist development along such a path *should* proceed far more broadly, freely, and swiftly owing to the tremendous growth of the home market and of the rise in the standard of living, the energy, initiative, and culture of the *entire* population. And Russia's vast lands available for colonisation, the utilisation of which is greatly hampered by the feudal oppression of the mass of the peasantry in Russia proper, as well as by the feudal-bureaucratic handling of the agrarian policy—these lands will provide the economic foundation for a huge expansion of agriculture and for increased production in both depth and breadth.

Such a path of development requires not only the abolition of landed proprietorship. For the rule of the

feudal landlords through the centuries has left its imprint on *all* forms of landownership in the country, on the peasant allotments as well as upon the holdings of the settlers in the relatively free borderlands: the whole colonisation policy of the autocracy is permeated with the Asiatic interference of a hidebound bureaucracy, which hindered the settlers from establishing themselves freely, introduced terrible confusion into the agrarian relationships, and infected the border regions with the poison of the feudal bureaucracy of central Russia.\* Not only is landed proprietorship in Russia medieval, but so also is the peasant allotment system. The latter is incredibly complicated. It splits the peasantry up into thousands of small units, medieval groups, social categories. It reflects the age-old history of arrogant interference in the peasants' agrarian relationships both by the central government and the local authorities. It drives the peasants, as into a ghetto, into petty medieval associations of a fiscal, tax-levying nature, into associations for the ownership of allotment land, i.e., into the village communes. And Russia's economic development is *in actual fact* tearing the peasantry out of this medieval environment—on the one hand, by causing allotments to be rented out and abandoned, and, on the other hand, by creating a system of farming by the free farmers of the future (or by the future Grossbauern of a Junker Russia) *out of the fragments* of the most diverse forms of landownership: privately owned allotments, rented allotments, purchased property, land rented from the landlord, land rented from the state, and so on.

In order to establish *really* free farming in Russia, it is necessary to "unfence" *all* the land, landlord as well as

\* Mr. A. Kaufman, in his *Migration and Colonisation* (St. Petersburg, 1905), gives an outline of the history of Russian colonisation policy. Like a good "liberal", he is excessively deferent to the feudal landlord bureaucracy.

allotment land. The *whole* system of medieval landownership must be broken up and all lands must be made equal for free farmers upon a free-soil. The greatest possible facilities must be created for the exchange of holdings, for the free choice of settlements, for rounding off holdings, for the creation of new, free associations, instead of the rusty, tax-levying village communes. The whole land must be "cleared" of all medieval lumber.

The expression of this economic necessity is the nationalisation of the land, the abolition of private ownership of the land, and the transfer of *all* the land to the state, which will mark a complete break with the feudal relations in the countryside. It is this economic necessity that has turned the *mass* of Russian peasants into supporters of land nationalisation. The mass of small-owner cultivators declared in favour of nationalisation at the congresses of the Peasant Union in 1905, in the First Duma in 1906, and in the Second Duma in 1907, i.e., during the whole of the first period of the revolution. They did so not because the "village commune" had imbued them with certain special "rudiments", certain special, non-bourgeois "labour principles". On the contrary, they did so because life required of them that they should seek *emancipation* from the medieval village commune and from the medieval allotment system. They did so not because they wanted or were able to build a socialist agriculture, but because they have been wanting and have been able to build a really bourgeois small-scale farming, i.e., farming freed as much as possible from *all* the traditions of serfdom.

Thus, it was neither chance nor the influence of this or that doctrine (as some short-sighted people think) that determined this peculiar attitude towards private ownership of the land on the part of the classes that are fighting in the Russian revolution. This peculiar attitude is to be explained by the conditions of the development of capitalism in Russia and by the requirements of capitalism at this

stage of its development. All the Black-Hundred landlords, all the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie (including the Octobrists *and the Cadets*) stand for private ownership of the land. The whole of the peasantry and the proletariat are opposed to the private ownership of the land. The reformatory path of creating a Junker-bourgeois Russia presupposes the preservation of the foundations of the old system of landownership and their slow adaptation to capitalism, which would be painful for the mass of the population. The revolutionary path of really overthrowing the old order inevitably requires, as its economic basis, the destruction of all the old forms of landownership, together with all the old political institutions of Russia. The experience of the first period of the Russian revolution has conclusively proved that it can be victorious only as a peasant agrarian revolution, and that the latter cannot completely fulfil its historical mission unless the land is nationalised.

Social-Democracy, as the party of the international proletariat, the party which has set itself world-wide socialist aims, cannot, of course, identify itself with any epoch of any bourgeois revolution, nor can it tie its destiny to this or that outcome of this or that bourgeois revolution. Whatever the outcome, we must remain an independent, purely proletarian party, which steadfastly leads the working masses to their great socialist goal. We cannot, therefore, undertake to guarantee that any of the gains of the bourgeois revolution will be permanent, because impermanence and inherent contradiction are immanent features of *all* the gains of the bourgeois revolution as such. The "invention" of "guarantees against restoration" can only be the fruit of shallow thinking. We have but one task: to rally the proletariat for the socialist revolution, to support every fight against the old order in the most resolute way, to fight for the best possible conditions for the proletariat in the developing bourgeois society. From this it inevitably follows that our Social-Democratic

programme in the Russian bourgeois revolution can *only* be nationalisation of the land. Like every other *part* of our programme, we must connect it with definite forms and a definite stage of political reform, because the scope of the political revolution and that of the agrarian revolution cannot but be the same. Like every other part of our programme, we must keep it strictly free from petty-bourgeois illusions, from intellectualist-bureaucratic chatter about "norms", from reactionary talk about strengthening the village communes, or about equalised land tenure. The interests of the proletariat do not demand that a special slogan, a special "plan" or "system" shall be invented for this or that bourgeois revolution, they only demand that the objective conditions for this revolution shall be *consistently* expressed and that these objective, economically unavoidable conditions be stripped of illusions and utopias. Nationalisation of the land is not only the sole means for completely eliminating medievalism in agriculture, but also the best form of agrarian relationships conceivable under capitalism.

Three circumstances have temporarily deflected the Russian Social-Democrats from this correct agrarian programme. First, P. Maslov, the initiator of "municipalisation" in Russia, "revised" the theory of Marx, repudiated the theory of absolute rent, and revived the semi-decayed bourgeois doctrines about the law of diminishing returns, its connection with the theory of rent, etc. To repudiate absolute rent is to deny that private landownership has any economic significance under capitalism, and, consequently, this inevitably led to the distortion of Marxist views on nationalisation. Secondly, not having before them visible evidence that the peasant revolution had *begun*, Russian Social-Democrats could not but regard its possibility with caution, because the possible victory of the revolution requires a number of especially favourable conditions and an especially favourable development of revolutionary consciousness, energy, and initiative on

the part of the masses. Having no *experience* to go on, and holding that it is impossible to invent *bourgeois* movements, the Russian Marxists naturally could not, *before the revolution*, present a correct agrarian programme. But even *after* the revolution had begun, they committed the following mistake: instead of *applying* the theory of Marx, to the special conditions prevailing in Russia (Marx and Engels always taught that their theory was not a dogma, but a *guide to action*<sup>56</sup>), they uncritically repeated the conclusions drawn from the application of Marx's theory to foreign conditions, to a *different* epoch. The German Social-Democrats, for instance, have quite naturally abandoned all the old programmes of Marx containing the demand for the nationalisation of the land, because Germany has taken final shape as a Junker-bourgeois country, and all movements there based on the bourgeois order have become completely obsolete, and there is not, nor can there be, any people's movement for nationalisation. The preponderance of Junker-bourgeois elements has *actually transformed* the plans for nationalisation into a plaything, or even into an instrument of the Junkers for robbing the masses. The Germans are right in refusing even to talk about nationalisation. But to apply this conclusion to Russia (as is done in effect by those of our Mensheviks who do not see the connection between municipalisation and Maslov's revision of the theory of Marx) is to reveal an inability to think of the tasks each Social-Democratic party has to perform in special periods of its historical development.

Thirdly, the municipalisation programme obviously reflects the erroneous tactical line of Menshevism in the Russian bourgeois revolution, namely, a failure to understand that only "an alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry"\* can ensure the victory of this revolution,

\* That is how Kautsky expressed it in the *second* edition of his pamphlet *Social Revolution*.

a failure to understand the leading role the proletariat plays in the bourgeois revolution, a striving to push the proletariat aside, to adapt it to a half-way outcome of the revolution, to convert it from a leader into an auxiliary (actually into a drudge and servant) of the liberal bourgeoisie. "Never enthusing, adaptation using, forward then slowly, ye workers so lowly"—these words of Nartsis Tuporylov<sup>57</sup> against the "Economists" (=the first opportunists in the R.S.D.L.P.), fully express the *spirit* of our present agrarian programme.

Combating the "enthusiasm" of petty-bourgeois socialism should lead not to the contraction, but to the expansion of the scope of the revolution and its aims as determined by the proletariat. It is not "regionalism" that we should encourage, no matter how strong it may be among the backward strata of the petty bourgeoisie or the privileged peasantry (Cossacks), not the exclusiveness of various nationalities—no, we should make the peasantry see how important unity is if victory is to be achieved, we should advance slogans that will widen the movement, not narrow it, and that will place the responsibility for the *incomplete* bourgeois revolution on the backwardness of the bourgeoisie and not on the lack of understanding of the proletariat. We should not "adapt" our programme to "local" democracy; we should not invent a rural "municipal socialism", which is absurd and impossible under an undemocratic central government; we should not adjust petty-bourgeois socialist reformism to the bourgeois revolution, but concentrate the attention of the masses on the actual conditions for the victory of the revolution as a bourgeois revolution, on the need for achieving not only local, but "central" democracy, i.e., the democratisation of the central government of the state—and not merely democracy in general, but the absolutely fullest, highest forms of democracy, for otherwise the peasant agrarian revolution in Russia will become *utopian* in the scientific sense of the term.

And let it not be thought that at the present moment of history, when the Black-Hundred die-hards are howling and raging in the Third Duma, when the *nec plus ultra* of rampant counter-revolution has been reached and reaction is perpetrating savage acts of political vengeance upon the revolutionaries in general and the Social-Democratic deputies in the Second Duma in particular—let it not be thought that this moment is "unsuitable" for "broad" agrarian programmes. Such a thought would be akin to the backsliding, despondency, disintegration, and decadence which have spread among wide sections of the petty-bourgeois intellectuals who belong to the Social-Democratic Party, or sympathise with this Party in Russia. The proletariat can only gain by having this rubbish swept clean out of the ranks of the workers' party. Yes, the more savagely reaction rages, the more does it actually retard the inevitable economic development, the more successfully does it prepare the wider upsurge of the democratic movement. And we must take advantage of the temporary lulls in mass action in order critically to study the experience of the great revolution, verify this experience, purge it of dross, and pass it on to the masses as a guide for the impending struggle.

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### What Is Happening in the Countryside?

Ex-Minister of Agriculture Yermolov's new book about the "present epidemic of incendiarism in Russia" has given rise to controversy in the newspapers. The liberal press has pointed out that fires in the countryside have not decreased but rather increased after the revolution. The reactionary newspapers have taken up Yermolov's outcry and lamentation about "the impunity of the incendiaries", "terrorism in the countryside", and so on. There has been an extraordinary increase in the number of fires in rural localities. For instance, between 1904 and 1907 the figure went up *twofold* in Tambov Gubernia, *two and a half times* in Orel Gubernia, and *threefold* in Voronezh Gubernia. "The more or less well-to-do peasants," writes *Novoye Uremya*, which acts as a lackey of the government, "want to set up farmsteads and are trying to introduce new farming methods, but are besieged, as if by guerrillas in enemy territory, by a lawless rural element that has run wild. They are being burned out and hounded, hounded and burned out until there is nothing left for them to do but 'abandon everything and flee'."

An unpleasant admission indeed for those supporting the tsarist government! For us Social-Democrats the latest information is not lacking in interest as further confirmation of the lies of the government and the pitiful impotence of liberal policy.

The Revolution of 1905 fully showed that the old order in the Russian countryside is irrevocably doomed by

history. Nothing in the world can bolster up this order. How is it to be changed? The peasant masses gave the answer by their uprisings in 1905 and through their deputies in the First and Second Dumas. The landed estates must be taken away from the landlords without compensation. When 30,000 landlords (headed by Nicholas Romanov) own 70 million dessiatines of land and ten million peasant households almost the same amount, the result can be nothing except bondage, abject poverty, ruin, and stagnation of the whole national economy. Hence the Social-Democratic Labour Party called on the peasants to take up the revolutionary struggle. By their mass strikes in 1905 the workers throughout Russia rallied the peasants and directed their struggle. The liberal plan to "reconcile" the peasants with the landlords through "redemption payments at a fair valuation" was an empty, miserable, treacherous trick.

How does the Stolypin government want to refashion the old order in the countryside? It wants to speed up the complete ruin of the peasants, to preserve the landed estates, to help an insignificant handful of rich peasants to set up farmsteads and grab as much as possible of the land of the village communes. The government has realised that the peasant masses are against it and it is trying to find allies among the rich peasants.

Stolypin himself once said that "twenty years of tranquillity" would be needed to carry out the "reform" proposed by the government. By "tranquillity" he means submissiveness on the part of the peasants, the absence of any struggle against violence. Yet without violence committed by the rural superintendents and other authorities, violence at every step, violence against *tens of millions*—without suppressing the slightest signs of independence on the part of these millions, the Stolypin "reform" cannot be carried out. Not even for three years, let alone twenty, has Stolypin been able to bring about "tranquillity", nor will he be able to do so; this is the unpleasant truth of

which the tsar's lackeys have been reminded by the ex-minister's book about fires in the countryside.

The peasants do not and cannot have any other way out of the position of desperate want, poverty, and death by starvation into which the government has plunged them than by mass struggle together with the proletariat to overthrow the tsarist regime. Preparation of the forces of the proletariat for this struggle, the creation, development, and consolidation of proletarian organisations—this is the immediate task of the R.S.D.L.P.

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## The Peasantry and the Working Class

In the Narodnik newspapers and magazines we often meet with the assertion that the workers and the "working" peasantry belong to the same class.

The absolute incorrectness of this view is obvious to anyone who understands that more or less developed capitalist production predominates in all modern states—i.e., capital rules the market and transforms the masses of working people into wage-workers. The so-called "working" peasant is in fact a *small proprietor*, or a petty bourgeois, who nearly always either hires himself out to work for somebody else or hires workers himself. Being a small proprietor, the "working" peasant also vacillates in politics between the masters and the workers, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Statistics on *wage-labour* in agriculture provide one of the most striking proofs of this property-owning, or bourgeois, nature of the "working" peasant. Bourgeois economists (including the Narodniks) usually praise the "vitality" of small production in agriculture, by which they mean farming without wage-labour. But they are not at all fond of precise figures on wage-labour among the peasantry!

Let us examine data on this question gathered by the most recent agricultural censuses—the Austrian census of 1902 and the German of 1907.

The more developed a country, the more extensively is wage-labour employed in agriculture. In Germany, out of

a total of 15,000,000 wage-workers, it is estimated that 4,500,000, or 30 per cent, are employed in agriculture; and in Austria, the figure is 1,250,000, or 14 per cent, out of a total of 9,000,000. But even in Austria, if we take farms usually regarded as peasant (or "working" peasant) farms, i.e., those from 2 to 20 hectares (one hectare equals nine-tenths of a dessiatine), we will find that wage-labour plays an important part. Farms from 5 to 10 hectares number 383,000; of these 126,000 employ wage-workers. Farms from 10 to 20 hectares number 242,000; of these 142,000, or nearly three-fifths, employ wage-workers.

Thus, small ("working") peasant farming exploits *hundreds of thousands* of wage-workers. The larger the peasant farm, the larger the number of wage-workers employed, together with a larger contingent of family workers. For example, in Germany, for every 10 peasant farms, there are:

Size of farm	Family workers	Wage workers	Total
2 to 5 hectares	25	4	29
5 to 10 "	31	7	38
10 to 20 "	34	17	51

The more affluent peasantry, who have more land and a larger number of "their own" workers in the family, employ *in addition* a larger number of *wage-workers*.

In capitalist society, which is entirely dependent on the market, small (peasant) production on a mass scale is *impossible* in agriculture without the mass employment of wage-labour. The sentimental catchword, "working" peasant, merely deceives the workers by *concealing* this exploitation of wage-labour.

In Austria, about one and a half million peasant farms (from 2 to 20 hectares) employ *half a million* wage-work-

ers. In Germany, two million peasant farms employ *more than one and a half million* wage-workers.

And what about the smaller farmers? They hire themselves out! They are wage-workers with a plot of land. For example, in Germany there are over three and a third million (3,378,509) farms of less than two hectares. Of these *less than half a million* (474,915) are *independent* farmers, and only a little less than *two million* (1,822,792) are *wage-workers*!

The very position of the small farmers in modern society, therefore, inevitably transforms them into petty bourgeois. They are eternally hovering between the wage-workers and the capitalists. The majority of the peasants live in poverty, are ruined and become proletarians, while the minority trail after the capitalists and help keep the masses of the rural population dependent upon the capitalists. That is why the peasants in all capitalist countries have so far mostly kept aloof from the workers' socialist movement and have joined various reactionary and bourgeois parties. Only an independent organisation of wage-workers which conducts a consistent class struggle can wrest the peasantry from the influence of the bourgeoisie and explain to them the absolute hopelessness of the small producers' position in capitalist society.

In Russia the position of the peasants in relation to capitalism is just the same as in Austria, Germany, etc. Our "specific feature" is our backwardness: the peasant is still confronted, not with the capitalist, but with the big *feudal* landowner, who is the principal bulwark of the economic and political backwardness of Russia.

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June 11, 1913

Collected Works,  
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## The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution

Draft Platform for the Proletarian Party

(Excerpt)

### The Agrarian and National Programmes

13. At the present moment we cannot say for certain whether a mighty agrarian revolution will develop in the Russian countryside in the near future. We cannot say exactly how profound the class cleavage is among the peasants, which has undoubtedly grown more profound of late as a division into agricultural labourers, wage-workers, and poor peasants ("semi-proletarians"), on the one hand, and wealthy and middle peasants (capitalists and petty capitalists), on the other. Such questions will be, and can be, decided only by experience.

Being the party of the proletariat, however, we are unquestionably in duty bound not only immediately to advance an agrarian (land) programme but also to advocate practical measures which can be immediately realised *in the interests* of the peasant agrarian revolution in Russia.

We must demand the nationalisation of *all* the land, i.e., that all the land in the state should become the property of the central state power. This power must fix the size, etc., of the resettlement land fund, pass legislation for the conservation of forests, for land improvement, etc., and absolutely prohibit any middlemen to interpose themselves between the owner of the land, i.e., the state, and the tenant, i.e., the tiller (prohibit all subletting of land). However, the *disposal* of the land, the determination of the *local regulations* governing ownership and tenure of land,

must in no case be placed in the hands of bureaucrats and officials, but wholly and exclusively in the hands of the regional and local *Soviets of Peasants' Deputies*.

In order to improve grain production techniques and increase output, and in order to develop rational cultivation on a large scale under public control, we must strive within the peasants' committees to secure the transformation of every confiscated landed estate into a large model farm controlled by the *Soviet of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies*.

In order to counteract the petty-bourgeois phrase-mongering and the policy prevailing among the Socialist-Revolutionaries, particularly the idle talk about "subsistence" standards or "labour" standards, "socialisation of the land", etc., the party of the proletariat must make it clear that small-scale farming under commodity production *cannot* save mankind from poverty and oppression.

Without necessarily splitting the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies at once, the party of the proletariat must explain the need for organising separate Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies and separate Soviets of deputies from the poor (semi-proletarian) peasants, or, at least for holding regular separate conferences of deputies of *this class status* in the shape of separate groups or parties within the general Soviets of Peasants' Deputies. Otherwise all the honeyed petty-bourgeois talk of the Narodniks regarding the peasants in general will serve as shield for the deception of the propertyless mass by the wealthy peasants, who are merely a variety of *capitalists*.

To counteract the bourgeois-liberal or purely bureaucratic sermons preached by many Socialist-Revolutionaries and Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies, who advise the peasants not to seize the landed estates and not to start the agrarian reform pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, the party of the proletariat must urge the peasants to carry out the agrarian reform at once on their own, and to confiscate the landed estates

immediately, upon the decisions of the peasants' deputies in the localities.

At the same time, it is most important to insist on the necessity of *increasing* food production for the soldiers at the front and for the towns, and on the absolute inadmissibility of causing any damage or injury to livestock, implements, machinery, buildings, etc.

14. As regards the national question, the proletarian party first of all must advocate the proclamation and immediate realisation of complete freedom of secession from Russia for all the nations and peoples who were oppressed by tsarism, or who were forcibly joined to, or forcibly kept within the boundaries of, the state, i.e., annexed.

All statements, declarations, and manifestos concerning renunciation of annexations that are not accompanied by the realisation of the right of secession in practice, are nothing but bourgeois deception of the people, or else pious petty-bourgeois wishes.

The proletarian party strives to create as large a state as possible, for this is to the advantage of the working people; it strives to *draw* nations *closer together*, and bring about their *further fusion*; but it desires to achieve this aim not by violence, but exclusively through a free fraternal union of the workers and the working people of all nations.

The more democratic the Russian republic, and the more successfully it organises itself into a Republic of Soviets of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, the more powerful will be the force of *voluntary* attraction to such a republic on the part of the working people of *all* nations.

Complete freedom of secession, the broadest local (and national) autonomy, and elaborate guarantees of the rights of national minorities—this is the programme of the revolutionary proletariat.

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### Congress of Peasants' Deputies<sup>58</sup>

A Congress of representatives of peasants' organisations and Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, who have met to draw up regulations for the convocation of an All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies and to set up similar local Soviets, has been in session in the Taurida Palace since April 13.

According to *Dyelo Naroda*,<sup>59</sup> representatives from more than 20 gubernias are attending the Congress.

Resolutions have been adopted urging the need for the speediest organisation of the "peasantry" from bottom to "top". "Soviets of Peasants' Deputies functioning in the various areas" have been declared to be the "best form of organisation of the peasantry".

Bykhovsky, a member of the provisional bureau for the convocation of the present Congress, has pointed out that a decision to organise the peasantry by setting up an All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies had been taken by the Moscow Co-operative Congress, representing an organised membership of twelve million, or fifty million of the population.

This is an undertaking of tremendous importance, which must be given every support. If it is carried out without delay, if the peasantry, in spite of Shingaryov,<sup>60</sup> takes over all the land immediately by a majority decision and not by "voluntary agreement" with the landowners as he

would have it, then not only the soldiers, who would receive more bread and meat, but also the cause of freedom would gain by it.

For the organisation of the peasants, carried out from below without the officials and without the "control and supervision" of the landowners and their hangers-on, is the only reliable pledge of success for the revolution, for freedom, for the liberation of Russia from the yoke and bondage of the landowners.

There is no doubt that all members of our Party, all class-conscious workers, will do their utmost to support the organisation of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, will see to it that their numbers are increased and their strength consolidated, and will exert every effort to work inside these Soviets along consistent and strictly proletarian class lines.

To carry on this work, it is necessary to organise separately the proletarian elements (agricultural labourers, day-labourers, etc.) *within* the general peasant Soviets, or (sometimes *and*) set up separate Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies.

Our object is not to scatter forces; on the contrary, in order to strengthen and broaden the movement, we must arouse the "*lowest*"—to use the terminology of the landowners and capitalists—section of society, or, more correctly, class.

To build up the movement, we must free it from the influence of the bourgeoisie; we must try to rid it of the inevitable weaknesses, vacillations, and mistakes of the petty bourgeoisie.

This work must be done by means of friendly persuasion, without anticipating events, without hurrying to "consolidate" organisationally that which the representatives of the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians have not yet fully realised, thought out, and digested for *themselves*. But it must be done, and a start must be made at once everywhere.

The practical demands and slogans, or, more properly, the proposals that have to be made to gain the *attention* of the peasants, should be based on vital and urgent issues.

The first issue is that of the land. The rural proletarians will be for the complete and immediate transfer of *all* the land without exception to the whole people, and for its being taken over immediately by the local committees. But you cannot eat land. The millions of households that have no horses, implements, or seeds will gain nothing from the transfer of the land to the "people".

The question of continuing to run the big farms, wherever at all possible, as large-scale enterprises, directed by agricultural experts and the Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies and using the best machines, seeds, and most efficient farming methods, must be discussed and practical measures taken without delay.

We cannot conceal from the peasants, least of all from the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians, that small-scale farming under commodity economy and capitalism *cannot* rid humanity of mass poverty, that it is necessary to *think* about going over to large-scale farming conducted on public lines and to *tackle this job at once* by teaching the masses, and in turn *learning from the masses*, the practical expedient measures for bringing about such a transition.

Another vital and pressing issue is that of the organisation and administration of the state. It is not enough to preach democracy, not enough to proclaim it and decree it, not enough to entrust the people's "representatives" in representative institutions with its implementation. Democracy must be *built* at once, from below, through the initiative of the masses themselves, through their effective participation in *all* fields of state activity, without "supervision" from above, without the bureaucracy.

Replacement of the police, the bureaucracy, and the standing army by the universal arming of the whole people, by a universal *militia* of the entire people, women

included, is a practical job that can and should be tackled immediately. The more initiative, variety, daring, and creativeness the masses contribute to this, the better. Not only the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians, but nine-tenths of the peasantry probably will follow us if we explain our proposals clearly, simply, and intelligibly by demonstrating examples and lessons from real life. Our proposals are:

- not to allow the restoration of the police;
- not to allow the restoration of the absolute powers of officials who, in effect, are undisplaceable and who belong to the landowner or capitalist class;
- not to allow the restoration of a standing army separated from the people, for such an army is the surest guarantee that attempts of all kinds will be made to stamp out freedom and restore the monarchy;
- to teach the people, down to the very bottom, the art of government not only in theory but in practice, by beginning to make immediate use everywhere of the experience of the masses.

Democracy from below, democracy without an officialdom, without a police, without a standing army; voluntary social duty by a *militia* formed from a universally armed people—this is a guarantee of freedom which no tsars, no swashbuckling generals, and no capitalists can take away.

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*Collected Works,*  
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### Resolution of the Seventh (April) All-Russia Conference of the R.S.D.L.P.(B.) on the Agrarian Question

The existence of landed estates in Russia is the material mainstay of the power of the feudalist landowners and a guarantee of the possible restoration of the monarchy. This system of landownership necessarily condemns the great mass of Russia's population, the peasantry, to pauperism, bondage, and a downtrodden existence, and the entire country to backwardness in every sphere of life.

Peasant landownership in Russia, both of allotment land (communal and homestead) and private land (leased or purchased), is fettered all round, from top to bottom, by old semi-feudal ties and relationships, by the division of the peasants into categories inherited from the time of serfdom, by the open field system, and so on, and so forth. The need for breaking down all these antiquated and harmful restrictions, for "clearing" the land, and reconstructing and readjusting all the relations of landownership and agriculture to the new conditions of Russian and world economy, forms the material foundation of the peasants' urge towards the nationalisation of *all* the land in the state.

Whatever the petty-bourgeois utopias in which all Narodnik parties and groups array the struggle of the peasant masses against feudalist big landownership and all the feudal fetters of the entire system of landownership and land tenure in Russia, that struggle is itself an ex-

pression of a thoroughly bourgeois-democratic, undoubtedly progressive, and economically essential striving resolutely to break all those fetters.

Nationalisation of the land, though being a bourgeois measure, implies freedom for the class struggle and freedom of land tenure from all non-bourgeois adjuncts to the greatest possible degree conceivable in a capitalist society. Moreover, nationalisation of the land, representing as it does the abolition of private ownership of land, would, in effect, deal such a powerful blow to private ownership of all the means of production in general that the party of the proletariat must facilitate such a reform in every possible way.

On the other hand, the well-to-do peasants of Russia long ago evolved the elements of a peasant bourgeoisie, and the Stolypin agrarian reform<sup>61</sup> has undoubtedly strengthened, augmented, and reinforced these elements. At the other pole of the rural population, the agricultural wage-workers, the proletarians, and the mass of semi-proletarian peasantry, who stand close to the proletarians, have likewise gained in strength and numbers.

The more determined and consistent the break-up and elimination of the landed estates and the more determined and consistent the bourgeois-democratic agrarian reform in Russia in general, the more vigorous and speedy will be the development of the class struggle of the agricultural proletariat against the well-to-do peasants (the peasant bourgeoisie).

The fate and the outcome of the Russian revolution—unless the incipient proletarian revolution in Europe exercises a direct and powerful influence on our country—will depend on whether the urban proletariat succeeds in rallying the rural proletariat together with the mass of rural semi-proletarians behind it, or whether this mass follows the lead of the peasant bourgeoisie, which is gravitating towards an alliance with Guchkov and Milyukov,<sup>62</sup> with the capitalists and landowners, and towards the counter-revolution in general.

In view of this class situation and balance of forces the Conference resolves that:

1) The party of the proletariat will fight with all its might for the immediate and complete confiscation of all landed estates in Russia (and also crown lands, church lands, etc., etc.);

2) The party will vigorously advocate the immediate transfer of all lands to the peasantry organised in Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, or in other organs of local self-government elected in a really democratic way and entirely independent of the landowners and officials;

3) The party of the proletariat demands the nationalisation of all the land in the country; nationalisation, which signifies the transfer of the right of ownership of all land to the state, vests the right of administering the land in local democratic institutions;

4) The party must wage a determined struggle, on the one hand, against the Provisional Government, which, both through the mouth of Shingaryov and by its collective utterances, is trying to force the peasants to come to a "voluntary agreement with the landowners", i.e., is trying virtually to impose upon them a reform which suits the interests of the landowners, and is threatening the peasants with punishment for "arbitrary action", that is, with the use of violence by a minority of the population (the landowners and capitalists) against the majority; on the other hand, against the petty-bourgeois vacillations of the majority of the Narodniks and the Menshevik Social-Democrats, who are advising the peasants not to take all the land pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly;

5) The party advises the peasants to take the land in an organised way, not allowing the slightest damage to property, and taking measures to increase production;

6) Agrarian reforms, by and large, can be successful and durable only provided the whole state is democratised, i.e., provided, on the one hand, the police, the standing army, and the privileged bureaucracy are abolished, and provid-

ed, on the other, there exists a system of broad local self-government completely free from supervision and tutelage from above;

7) The separate and independent organisation of the agricultural proletariat must be undertaken immediately and everywhere, both in the form of Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies (as well as of separate Soviets of deputies of the semi-proletarian peasantry) and in the form of proletarian groups or factions within the general Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, in all local and municipal government bodies, etc.;

8) The party must support the initiative of those peasant committees which in a number of localities in Russia are handing over the livestock and agricultural implements of the landowners to the peasants organised in those committees, to be used in a socially regulated manner for the cultivation of all the land;

9) The party of the proletariat must advise the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians to strive to convert every landed estate into a fair-sized model farm to be run on public lines by the Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies under the direction of agricultural experts and with the application of the best technique.

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*Collected Works*,  
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### **An Open Letter to the Delegates to the All-Russia Congress of Peasants' Deputies**

Comrades, peasant deputies;

The Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks), to which I have the honour to belong, wanted me to represent our Party at the Peasant Congress, but illness has prevented me from carrying out this commission. I therefore take the liberty of addressing this open letter to you in order to greet the all-Russia union of the peasantry and briefly to point out the deep-seated differences that divide our Party on the one hand and the party of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and the Menshevik Social-Democrats on the other.

These profound differences concern the three most important issues: the land, the war, and state organisation.

All the land must belong to the people. All the landed estates must be turned over to the peasants without compensation. This is clear. The dispute here is whether or not the peasants in the local areas should take all the land at once, without paying any rent to the landowners, or wait until the Constituent Assembly meets.

Our Party believes that they should, and advises the peasants locally to take over all the land without delay, and to do it in as organised a way as possible, under no circumstances allowing damage to property and exerting every effort to increase the production of grain and meat

since the troops at the front are in dire straits. In any case, although the final decision on how to dispose of the land will be made by the Constituent Assembly, a preliminary settlement now, at once, in time for the spring sowing, can be made only by local bodies, inasmuch as our Provisional Government, which is a government of the landowners and capitalists, is putting off the convocation of the Constituent Assembly and so far has not even fixed a date for it.

Only local bodies are able preliminarily to take charge of the land. The fields must be sown to crops. Most of the peasants in the local areas are quite capable of making use of the land in an organised way, of ploughing and putting it all under crops. This is essential if the supply of food to the soldiers at the front is to be improved. Hence, to wait for the Constituent Assembly is out of the question. We by no means deny the right of the Constituent Assembly finally to institute public ownership of the land and to regulate its disposal. In the meantime, however, right now, this spring, the peasants themselves must decide locally what to do with it. The soldiers at the front can and should send delegates to the villages.

Further. For all the land to pass over to the working people, a close alliance of the urban workers and the poor peasants (semi-proletarians) is essential. Unless such an alliance is formed, the capitalists cannot be defeated. And if they are not defeated, no transfer of the land to the people will deliver them from poverty. You cannot eat land, and without money, without capital, there is no way of obtaining implements, livestock, or seed. The peasants must trust not the capitalists or the rich muzhiks (who are capitalists too), but only the urban workers. Only in alliance with the latter can the poor peasants ensure that the land, the railways, the banks, and the factories become the property of all the working people; if this is not done, the mere transfer of the land to the people cannot abolish want and pauperism.

Workers in certain localities in Russia are already beginning to establish their supervision (control) over the factories. Such control by the workers is to the peasants' advantage, for it means increased production and cheaper products. The peasants must give their fullest support to this initiative on the part of the workers and not believe the slander which the capitalists spread against the workers.

The second question is the question of the war.

This war is a war of conquest. It is being waged by the capitalists of all countries with predatory aims, to increase their profits. To the working people this war can spell only ruin, suffering, devastation, and brutalisation. That is why our Party, the party of class-conscious workers and poor peasants, emphatically and unqualifiedly condemns this war, refuses to justify the capitalists of the one country as against the capitalists of another, refuses to support the capitalists of any country whatever, and is working for the speediest termination of the war through the overthrow of the capitalists in all countries, through a workers' revolution in all countries.

In our new Provisional Government, there are ten ministers belonging to the landowner and capitalist parties and six to the Narodnik (Socialist-Revolutionary) and Menshevik Social-Democratic parties. In our opinion the Narodniks and Mensheviks have made a grave and fatal mistake in joining the capitalist government and in general agreeing to support it. Men like Tsereteli and Chernov are hoping to induce the capitalists to bring the present predatory war to a speedy and more honourable end. But these leaders of the Narodnik and Menshevik parties are mistaken: they are, in effect, helping the capitalists to prepare an offensive by the Russian troops against Germany, that is, to drag out the war, to add to the incredibly enormous sacrifices the Russian people have made in the war.

We are convinced that the capitalists in all countries



are deceiving the people by promising an early and just peace when they are actually prolonging the war of conquest. The Russian capitalists, who controlled the old Provisional Government and continue to control the new one, did not even wish to publish the secret predatory treaties ex-Tsar Nicholas Romanov concluded with the capitalists of Britain, France, and other countries with the object of wresting Constantinople from the Turks, Galicia from the Austrians, Armenia from the Turks, and so on. The Provisional Government has confirmed these treaties.

Our Party maintains that these treaties are just as criminal and predatory as the treaties the German brigand-capitalists and their brigand-Emperor Wilhelm have with their allies.

The blood of the workers and peasants must not be shed for the sake of such predatory aims of the capitalists.

This criminal war must be brought to a speedy end, *not* by a separate peace with Germany, *but by a universal peace*, not by a capitalist peace, but by a peace of the working masses *against* the capitalists. There is only one way to do this, and that is by transferring all state power to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies both in Russia and in other countries. Only such Soviets will be able effectively to prevent the capitalists from deceiving the peoples, and prevent the war being dragged on by the capitalists.

This brings me to the third and last of the questions I have mentioned: the question of state organisation.

Russia must become a democratic republic. Even the majority of the landowners and capitalists, who have always stood for the monarchy but now see that the people of Russia will on no account allow it to be restored, are in agreement with this. The capitalists now have directed all their efforts at making the Russian republic as much like a monarchy as possible so that it might be

changed back into a monarchy with the least difficulty (this has happened time and again in many countries). For this purpose the capitalists want to preserve the bureaucracy, which stands *above* the people, to preserve police and the standing army, which is separated from the people and commanded by non-elective generals and other officers. And the generals and other officers, unless they are elected, will almost invariably be landowners and capitalists. That much we know from the experience of all the republics in the world.

Our Party, the party of class-conscious workers and poor peasants, is therefore working for a democratic republic of another kind. We want a republic where there is no police that browbeats the people; where all officials, from the bottom up, are elective and displaceable whenever the people demand it, and are paid salaries not higher than the wages of a competent worker; where all army officers are similarly elective and where the standing army separated from the people and subordinated to classes alien to the people is replaced by the universally armed people, by a people's militia.

We want a republic where all state power, from the bottom up, belongs wholly and exclusively to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants', and other Deputies.

The workers and peasants are the majority of the population. The power must belong to them, not to the landowners or the capitalists.

The workers and peasants are the majority of the population. The power and the functions of administration must belong to *their Soviets*, not to the bureaucracy.

Such are our views, comrade peasant deputies. We are firmly convinced that experience will soon show the broad masses how erroneous the policy of the Narodniks and Mensheviks is. Experience will soon show the masses that compromise with the capitalists cannot save Russia, which, like Germany and other countries, is standing

on the brink of disaster, cannot save the war-wearied peoples. The transfer of all state power directly to the majority of the population alone can save the peoples.

Petrograd, May 7, 1917

*N. Lenin*

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### **Draft Resolution on the Agrarian Question Submitted to the First All-Russia Congress of Peasants' Deputies**

1) All landed estates and privately-owned lands, as well as crown and church lands, etc., are to be turned over immediately to the people without any compensation.

2) The peasantry must in an organised manner, through their Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, immediately take over all the land in their localities for the purpose of its economic exploitation, without however in any way prejudicing thereby the final establishment of land regulations by the Constituent Assembly or by the All-Russia Council of Soviets, should the people decide to vest the central power of the state in such a Council of Soviets.

3) Private property in land must be abolished altogether, i.e., all the land shall belong only to the nation as a whole, and its disposal shall be placed in the hands of the local democratic institutions.

4) The peasants must reject the advice of the capitalists and landowners and their Provisional Government to come to "an agreement" with the local landowners on the immediate disposal of the land; the disposal of all the land must be governed by the organised decision of the majority of the local peasants and not by an agreement between the majority, i.e., the peasants, and the minority, and an insignificant minority at that, i.e., the landowners.

5) Not only the landowners are fighting and will continue to fight as hard as they can against the transfer of all landed estates to the peasants without compensation,

but also the capitalists, who wield great power both because of their money and because of their influence on the as yet unenlightened masses through the newspapers and the numerous officials, employees, etc., who are accustomed to the domination of capital. Hence, the transfer of all the landed estates to the peasantry without compensation cannot be carried through on a complete and secure basis unless the confidence of the peasant masses in the capitalists is destroyed, unless a close alliance is established between the peasantry and the urban workers, and unless state power is taken over completely by the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', Peasants', and other Deputies. Only state power wielded by such Soviets and administering the state not through a police, or a bureaucracy, or a standing army isolated from the people, but through a nation-wide, universal and armed militia of the workers and peasants, can guarantee the realisation of the above-mentioned agrarian reforms, which are being demanded by the entire peasantry.

6) Agricultural labourers and poor peasants, i.e., those who, because of the lack of sufficient land, cattle, and implements, earn a living partly by working for hire, must strive their hardest to organise themselves independently into separate Soviets, or into separate groups within the general peasants' Soviets, in order to protect their interests against the rich peasants, who inevitably strive towards an alliance with the capitalists and landowners.

7) As a result of the war, Russia, like all other belligerent and many neutral (non-belligerent) countries, is facing an economic debacle, disaster, and famine owing to the shortage of workers, coal, iron, etc. The only way to save the country is by the workers' and peasants' deputies assuming control and management of the entire production and distribution of goods. It is therefore necessary to proceed immediately to arrange agreements between Soviets of Peasants' Deputies and Soviets of Workers' Deputies on the exchange of grain and other rural

products for implements, footwear, clothing, etc., without the medium of the capitalists, who must be removed from the management of the factories. With the same purpose in view, the peasant committees must be encouraged to take over the livestock and implements of the landowners, such livestock and implements to be used in common. Similarly, the conversion of all large landed estates into model farms must be encouraged, the land to be cultivated collectively with the aid of the best implements under the direction of agricultural experts and in accordance with the decision of the local Soviets of Agricultural Labourers' Deputies.

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## The Need for an Agricultural Labourers' Union in Russia

### Article One

There is a highly important question which the All-Russia Trade Union Conference now in session in Petrograd should consider. It is the question of founding an all-Russia union of *agricultural labourers*.

All classes in Russia are organising. Only the class which is the most exploited and the poorest of all, the most disunited and downtrodden—the class of Russia's agricultural wage-labourers—seems to have been forgotten. In some non-Russian border regions, such as the Latvian territory, there are organisations of agricultural wage-labourers. The rural proletariat in the vast majority of the Great-Russian and Ukrainian gubernias has no class organisations.

It is the indisputable and paramount duty of the vanguard of Russia's proletariat, the industrial workers' trade unions, to come to the aid of their brothers, the rural workers. The difficulties involved in organising the rural workers are clearly enormous, as is borne out by the experience of other capitalist countries.

This makes it all the more necessary to set about using political liberty in Russia as speedily and vigorously as possible and to immediately found a country-wide union of agricultural labourers. This can and must be done by the trade union conference. It is the more experienced, more developed, more class-conscious representatives of the proletariat gathered at this conference who can and

must issue a call to the rural workers, urging the latter to join them in the ranks of the independently organising workers, in the ranks of their trade unions. It is the wage-workers at the factories who must take the initiative and use the trade union cells, groups and branches scattered all over Russia to awaken the rural worker to independent action and to active participation in the struggle to improve his position and uphold his class interests.

It may seem to many, and perhaps even to most at the moment, that with the peasants organising throughout Russia and calling for the abolition of private ownership of land and for "equalised" land tenure, this is not the right time to set up a rural workers' union.

Quite the contrary. This is precisely the time when it is particularly opportune and urgent. Those who share the proletarian class point of view can have no doubt as to the correctness of the proposition which the Mensheviks approved at the Stockholm Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in 1906 on the initiative of the Bolsheviks, and which has ever since been part of the R.S.D.L.P. programme. That proposition reads:

"The Party should in *all* eventualities, and *whatever* the situation with regard to democratic agrarian reforms, consider it as its task to *steadfastly* strive for *independent class* organisation of the *rural proletariat* and explain to it the irreconcilable antithesis between its interests and the interests of the peasant bourgeoisie, to warn it against illusions about the small-holding system, which can never, as long as commodity production exists, do away with the poverty of the masses, and, lastly, to point to the need for a complete socialist revolution as the only means of abolishing all poverty and exploitation."

Every class-conscious worker, every union member, would agree that these propositions are correct. They must be carried out by the trade unions, since it is a question of *independent class organisation of the rural workers*.

We hope that at this revolutionary moment, when the urge to express themselves, to chart their own path, to

see that life is not shaped anew without the workers themselves independently deciding labour issues, is making itself felt among the working people in general and the workers in particular—that at this time the trade unions will not confine themselves to narrow craft interests and forget their weaker brethren, the rural workers, but will exert all their energy to help them by founding a union of Russia's rural workers.

In the next article, we shall try to outline some practical steps in this direction.

### Article Two

In the previous article we dealt with the fundamental significance of a rural workers' union in Russia. Here we shall touch upon certain practical aspects of the question.

A union of Russia's rural workers should group all who are engaged mainly, or *even partly*, as labourers at agricultural undertakings.

Experience will show whether or not it will be necessary to subdivide these unions into those of pure agricultural labourers and those of part-time labourers. At any rate, this is not the main thing. The main thing is that the fundamental class interests of *all* who sell their labour power are identical and that the unity of *all* who gain at least part of their livelihood by hiring themselves out is absolutely necessary.

The wage-workers in the cities, in the factories, are bound by thousands and millions of ties with the wage-workers in the countryside. A call issued by the former to the latter cannot go unheeded. But issuing a call is not the only thing to be done. The urban workers have far more experience, knowledge, means and forces. *Some of their forces* should be directly used to *help* the rural workers *on to their feet*.

All organised workers should give one day's wages to promote and strengthen the unity of town and country

wage-workers. Let a certain part of this sum be fully used as a contribution from the urban workers to the class unity of the rural workers. Let this fund be drawn on to cover the expenses of putting out a series of the most popular leaflets, of publishing a rural workers' newspaper—at least a weekly to begin with—and of sending at least a few agitators and organisers to the countryside to *immediately set up* unions of agricultural labourers in the various localities.

Only the experience gained by those unions themselves will help find the right method of furthering this work. Each union should first of all try to improve the condition of those who sell their labour power to agricultural undertakings and to secure higher pay, better housing conditions, better food, etc.

A most determined war must be declared on the preconceived notion that the coming abolition of private landownership can "give land" to every farm-band and day-labourer and undermine the very foundations of wage-labour in agriculture. This is a preconceived notion and, moreover, an extremely harmful one. The abolition of private landownership is a tremendous and unquestionably progressive reform that unquestionably meets the interests of economic development and the interests of the proletariat, a reform which every wage-worker will back to the utmost but which in no way eliminates wage-labour.

You cannot eat land. You cannot farm without livestock, implements, seed, a reserve of produce, or money. To rely on "promises" from anyone—that the wage-workers in the countryside will be "helped" to acquire livestock, implements, etc.—would be the worst kind of error, unpardonable naïveté.

The basic rule, the first commandment of any trade union movement is not to rely on the "state" but to rely only on the *strength of one's own class*. The state is an organisation of the ruling class.

Don't rely on promises. Rely only on the strength of the unity and political consciousness of your class!

That is why it must be made the immediate task of the rural workers' trade union not only to fight for better conditions for the workers in general, but in particular *to defend their interests as a class* during the coming great land reform.

Many peasants and Socialist-Revolutionaries maintain that "labour power must be put at the disposal of the volost committees". The class of agricultural labourers holds the opposite view—it wants the volost committees to be put at the disposal of labour power! It is clear enough where the master and the labourer stand.

"Land for the whole people." This is correct. *But the people are divided into classes.* Every worker knows, sees, feels, experiences this truth which the bourgeoisie deliberately obscure and the *petty bourgeoisie always forget.*

When alone, a poor man is helpless. No "state" will help the rural wage-worker, the farm-hand, the day-labourer, the poor peasant, the semi-proletarian, *if he does not help himself.* The first step in this direction is independent class organisation of the rural proletariat.

We hope the all-Russia trade union conference will tackle this task with the greatest energy, will issue a call to all Russia and hold out a helping hand, the mighty hand of the organised vanguard of the proletariat, to the rural workers.

*Pravda* Nos. 90 and 91,  
July 7 (June 24) and July 8  
(June 25), 1917

*Collected Works,*  
Vol. 25, pp. 122-26

## From a Publicist's Diary

### Peasants and Workers

*Izvestia of the All-Russia Congress of Peasants' Deputies*,<sup>63</sup> No. 88, of August 19, carries an exceedingly interesting article which should be regarded as basic material for every Party propaganda and agitation worker who has anything to do with the peasants and for every class-conscious worker who is going to the countryside or comes in contact with peasants.

The article is entitled "Model Mandate Compiled on the Basis of 242 Mandates Submitted by Local Deputies to the First All-Russia Congress of Peasants' Deputies Held in Petrograd, 1917".

The best thing would be for the Congress of Peasants' Deputies to publish as much detailed information as possible about all those mandates (if it is absolutely impossible to print them all in full, which, of course, would be preferable). It is particularly necessary, for instance, to have a full list of the gubernias, uyezds, and volosts, showing how many mandates have been received from each locality, when they were compiled or delivered, and to analyse at least the basic demands, so that we can tell whether the various points differ according to areas, whether such questions as abolition of private property rights to all *peasant* lands, periodic redistribution of land, prohibition of wage-labour, confiscation of the landowners' implements and livestock, etc., etc., are put differently in, say, areas with homestead and communal

land ownership, areas with Russian and non-Russian populations, central and outlying areas, areas that never had serfdom, and so on. No thorough-going study of the extraordinarily valuable material contained in the peasant mandates is possible without such details. And we Marxists must exert every effort to make a thorough-going study of the facts underlying our policy.

In the absence of better material, and as long as it has not been proved factually incorrect in one respect or another, the *summary of the mandates* (as we shall call the "Model Mandate") remains the only material of its kind which, we repeat, is an absolute must for every Party member.

The first part of the summary is devoted to general political principles, to demands of political democracy; the second, to the land question. (It is to be hoped that the All-Russia Congress of Peasants' Deputies or some other body will summarise the peasants' mandates and resolutions concerning the war.) Without going into detail in the first part, we shall note only two points from it, § 6, demanding the election of all office-holders, and § 11, calling for the abolition of the standing army once the war is over. These points bring the peasants' political programme *closest of all* to the Bolshevik Party programme. Basing ourselves on these points, we must stress and prove through all our propaganda and agitation that the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary leaders are traitors not only to socialism, but also to democracy. In Kronstadt, for instance, contrary to the will of the population and to democratic principles, and to please the capitalists, they upheld the office of a commissar subject to *approval* by the government, that is, an office not purely elective. In the Petrograd district councils and in other local self-government bodies, the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik leaders, contrary to democratic principles, are fighting the Bolshevik demand for the immediate institution of a workers' militia, to be succeeded by a popular militia.

According to the summary, the peasant land demands are primarily abolition of private ownership of all types of land, including the peasants' lands, without compensation; transfer of lands on which high-standard scientific farming is practised to the state or the communes; confiscation of all livestock and implements on the confiscated lands (peasants with little land are excluded) and their transfer to the state or the communes; a ban on wage-labour; equalised distribution of land among the working people, with periodical redistributions, and so on. In the transition period, pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, the peasants demand the *immediate* enactment of laws prohibiting the purchase and sale of land, abolition of laws concerning separation from the commune, farmsteads, etc.,<sup>64</sup> laws protecting forests, fisheries, etc., abolishing long-term and revising short-term leases, and so on.

You do not have to give these demands a lot of thought to see that it is absolutely impossible to realise them *in alliance* with the capitalists, without breaking completely with them, without waging the most determined and ruthless struggle against the capitalist class, without overthrowing its rule.

The Socialist-Revolutionaries are deceiving themselves and the peasants precisely by assuming and spreading the idea that these reforms, or *similar* reforms, are possible without overthrowing capitalist rule, without all state power being transferred to the proletariat, without the peasant poor supporting the most resolute, revolutionary measures of a proletarian state power against the capitalists. The significance of the appearance of a Left wing among the "Socialist-Revolutionaries" is that it proves there is a growing awareness of this deception within their party.

Indeed, confiscation of all private land means the confiscation of hundreds of millions in capital belonging to the banks to which the greater part of this land is mortgaged. How can any measure like this be taken without

the revolutionary class overcoming the capitalists' resistance by revolutionary methods? Moreover, it is here a question of the most highly centralised capital of all, bank capital, which is connected through billions of threads with all the nerve centres of the capitalist economy of a huge country and which can be defeated only by the no less centralised might of the urban proletariat.

Further, take the transfer of highly efficient farms to the state. Obviously, the "state" capable of taking them over and running them really and truly in the interests of the working people, and not in the interests of the officials and the capitalists themselves, must be a proletarian revolutionary state.

The confiscation of stud farms, etc., and then of all livestock and implements, is something more than striking one staggering blow after another at private ownership of the means of production. It means taking steps towards socialism, for the transfer of *livestock and implements* "to the exclusive use of the state or a commune" implies large-scale, socialist agriculture or at least socialist control over integrated small farms, socialist regulation of their economy.

And what about a "ban" on wage-labour? This is a meaningless phrase, helpless, unwittingly naïve wishful thinking on the part of downtrodden petty proprietors, who do not see that capitalist industry as a whole would come to a standstill if there were no reserve army of wage-labour in the countryside, that it is impossible to "ban" wage-labour in the villages while permitting it in the towns, and lastly, that to "ban" wage-labour means nothing but a step towards socialism.

Here we come to the fundamental question of the workers' attitude to the peasants.

A mass Social-Democratic workers' movement has existed in Russia for more than twenty years (if we begin with the great strikes of 1896). Throughout this long span of time, through two great revolutions, through the

entire political history of Russia, runs the issue of whether the working class is to lead the peasants forward, to socialism, or whether the liberal bourgeoisie are to drag them back, to conciliation with capitalism.

The opportunist wing of the Social-Democrats has always reasoned by the worldly-wise formula: *since* the Socialist-Revolutionaries are petty bourgeois, "we" reject their philistine utopian views on socialism *in the name of* bourgeois rejection of socialism. Struvism neatly replaces Marxism, and Menshevism slithers down to the role of a Cadet flunkey seeking to "reconcile" the peasants to bourgeois rule. The latest and most striking evidence of that role is that Tsereteli and Skobelev, hand in hand with Chernov and Avksentyev, were busy signing the Cadets' reactionary landowner decrees in the name of "revolutionary democrats".

The revolutionary Social-Democrats, who have never renounced criticism of the petty-bourgeois illusions of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, and *never entered into any bloc* with them except *against* the Cadets, work unremittingly *to wrest* the peasants away from Cadet influence, and in opposition to the philistine's utopian view of socialism, put forward the revolutionary proletarian road to socialism instead of liberal conciliation with capitalism.

Now that the war has speeded up developments fantastically, aggravated the crisis of capitalism to the utmost, and confronted the peoples with making an immediate choice between destruction and immediate determined strides towards socialism, the full depth of the gulf between semi-liberal Menshevism and revolutionary proletarian Bolshevism is clearly revealed over the practical issue of what action the tens of millions of peasants should take.

Accept the rule of capital *because* "we" are not yet ripe for socialism, the Mensheviks tell the peasants, substituting, incidentally, the abstract question of "socialism" in general for the concrete question of whether it is possible



to heal the wounds inflicted by the war without decisive strides towards socialism.

Accept capitalism *because* the Socialist-Revolutionaries are petty-bourgeois utopians, the Mensheviks tell the peasants and rally together with the Socialist-Revolutionaries to support the Cadet government.

And the Socialist-Revolutionaries, beating their breast, assure the peasants that they are against any peace with the capitalists, that they have never regarded the Russian revolution as a bourgeois revolution—and *therefore* enter into a bloc with the *opportunist* Social-Democrats and rally to support a bourgeois government. The Socialist-Revolutionaries sign all peasant programmes, however revolutionary, except that they do so not to carry them out, but to pigeon-hole them and deceive the peasants with the most non-committal promises, while actually pursuing for months a policy of compromise with the Cadets in the coalition government.

This crying, practical, direct, palpable betrayal of the peasants' interests by the Socialist-Revolutionaries radically alters the situation. We must take this change into account. It is not enough to conduct agitation against the Socialist-Revolutionaries in the old way, the way we did between 1902 and 1903, and 1905 and 1907. It is not enough to expose theoretically the petty-bourgeois illusions of "socialisation of land", "equalised land tenure", "a ban on wage-labour", etc.

That was on the eve of the bourgeois revolution, or before the bourgeois revolution's completion, and the task was primarily to carry it through to overthrow the monarchy.

Now the monarchy has been overthrown. The bourgeois revolution has been completed in so far as Russia has become a democratic republic with a government of Cadets, Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. And the war in the past three years has pushed us a good thirty years ahead. It has forced on Europe universal labour

service and the compulsory syndication of undertakings, caused hunger and unprecedented ravages in the leading countries, and imposed steps towards socialism.

The fundamental premise of our class policy at that time was that only the workers and peasants can overthrow the monarchy. And this premise was correct. February and March 1917 reaffirmed this.

The premise of our class policy today is that only the proletariat, leading the poorest peasants (the semi-proletarians, as our programme puts it), can end the war with a democratic peace, heal the war wounds, and initiate steps towards socialism which have become absolutely necessary and *urgent*.

It follows that the emphasis in our propaganda and agitation against the Socialist-Revolutionaries must be shifted to the fact that they have betrayed the peasants. They represent a minority of well-to-do farmers rather than the mass of the peasant poor. They are leading the peasants to an alliance with the capitalists, i.e., to subordination to them, rather than to an alliance with the workers. They have bartered the interests of the working and exploited people for ministerial posts and a bloc with the Mensheviks and Cadets.

History, accelerated by the war, has forged so far ahead that the old formulas have acquired a new meaning. "A ban on wage-labour" was formerly *only* an empty phrase bandied about by the petty-bourgeois intellectual. In the light of today, it means something different: the millions of peasant poor say in their 242 mandates that they want hired labour abolished but do not know how to do it. We know how. We know that this can be done only in alliance with the workers, under their leadership, against the capitalists, not through a compromise with them.

These are the changes that the basic line of our propaganda and agitation against the Socialist-Revolutionaries, the basic line we pursue in addressing the peasants, must now undergo.

The Socialist-Revolutionary Party has betrayed you, comrade peasants. It has betrayed the hovels and deserted to the palaces, if not the royal palaces, then those where the Cadets, those bitter enemies of the revolution, and particularly the peasant revolution, sit in the same government as the Chernovs, Peshekhonovs, and Avksentyevs.

Only the revolutionary proletariat, only the vanguard that unites it, the Bolshevik Party, can *actually* carry out the programme of the peasant poor which is put forward in the 242 mandates. For the revolutionary proletariat is *really* advancing to the abolition of wage-labour along the only correct path, through the overthrow of capital and not by prohibiting the hiring of labourers, not through a "ban" on wage-labour. The revolutionary proletariat is *really* advancing to confiscation of land, implements, and agricultural technical establishments, to what the peasants want and what the Socialist-Revolutionaries *cannot* give them.

This is how the basic line pursued by the worker in addressing the peasant must now change. We workers can and will give you what the peasant poor want and are searching for without always knowing where and how to find it. We workers are upholding our own interests and at the same time the interests of the vast majority of the peasants *against the capitalists*, while the Socialist-Revolutionaries, allying themselves with the capitalists, are betraying these interests.

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Let us recall what Engels said on the peasant question shortly before his death. He stressed that socialists have no intention whatever of expropriating the small peasants, and that the advantages of mechanised socialist agriculture will be made clear to them only *by force of example*.

The war has now confronted Russia in practice with a problem of exactly this order. There is a shortage of

implements. They must be confiscated, and the highly efficient farms must not be "divided up".

The peasants have begun to realise this. Need has compelled them to do so. The war has compelled them, for there are no implements to be had anywhere. What there is must be thriftily husbanded. And large-scale farming means saving labour through the use of implements as well as many other things.

The peasants want to keep their small farms, to set equal standards for all, and to make readjustments on an equalitarian basis from time to time. Fine. No sensible socialist will differ with the peasant poor over this. If the land is confiscated, that *means* the domination of the banks has been undermined, if the implements are confiscated, that *means* the domination of capital has been undermined—and in that case, *provided the proletariat rules centrally*, provided political power is taken over by the proletariat, the rest will come *by itself*, as a result of "force of example", prompted by experience.

The crux of the matter lies in political power passing into the hands of the proletariat. When this has taken place, everything that is essential, basic, fundamental in the programme set out in the 242 mandates *will become feasible*. Life will show what modifications it will undergo as it is carried out. This is an issue of secondary importance. We are not doctrinaires. Our theory is a guide to action, not a dogma.

We do not claim that Marx knew or Marxists know the road to socialism down to the last detail. It would be nonsense to claim anything of the kind. What we know is the direction of this road, and the class forces that follow it; the specific, practical details will come to light only through the *experience of the millions* when they take things into their own hands.

Trust the workers, comrade peasants, and break with the capitalists! Only in close alliance with the workers *can* you begin to carry out the programme set out in the

242 mandates. Allied with the capitalists and led by the Socialist-Revolutionaries, you will never live to see *a single* determined, radical step in the spirit of this programme.

But when in alliance with the urban workers, waging a ruthless struggle against capital, you *begin* to realise the programme of the 242 mandates, the whole world will come to our aid and your assistance, and then the success of that programme—not as it stands now, but in its essence—will be assured. When that happens, the domination of capital and wage-slavery will come to an end. That will be the beginning of the reign of socialism, the reign of peace, the reign of the working people.

*Rabochy* No. 6,  
September 11 (August 29), 1917

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### Report on Land at the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies

October 26 (November 8), 1917

We maintain that the revolution has proved and demonstrated how important it is that the land question should be put clearly. The outbreak of the armed uprising, the second, the October Revolution, clearly proves that the land must be turned over to the peasants. The government that have been overthrown and the compromising parties of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries committed a crime when they kept postponing the settlement of the land question on various pretexts and thereby brought the country to economic chaos and a peasant revolt. Their talk about riots and anarchy in the countryside sounds false, cowardly, and deceitful. Where and when have riots and anarchy been provoked by wise measures? If the government had acted wisely, and if their measures had met the needs of the poor peasants, would there have been unrest among the peasant masses? But all the measures of the government, approved by the Avksentyev and Dan Soviets,<sup>65</sup> went counter to the interests of the peasants and compelled them to revolt.

Having provoked the revolt, the government raised a hue and cry about riots and anarchy, for which they themselves were responsible. They were going to crush it by blood and iron, but were themselves swept away by the armed uprising of the revolutionary soldiers, sailors, and workers. The first duty of the government of the workers' and peasants' revolution must be to settle the

land question, which can pacify and satisfy the vast masses of poor peasants. I shall read to you the clauses of a decree your Soviet Government must issue. In one of the clauses of this decree is embodied the Mandate to the Land Committees, compiled on the basis of 242 mandates from local Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.

### DECREE ON LAND

1) Landlord ownership of land is abolished forthwith without any compensation.

2) The landed estates, as also all crown, monastery, and church lands, with all their livestock, implements, buildings and everything pertaining thereto, shall be placed at the disposal of the volost land committees and the uyezds Soviets of Peasants' Deputies pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly.

3) All damage to confiscated property, which henceforth belongs to the whole people, is proclaimed a grave crime to be punished by the revolutionary courts. The uyezds Soviets of Peasants' Deputies shall take all necessary measures to assure the observance of the strictest order during the confiscation of the landed estates, to determine the size of estates, and the particular estates subject to confiscation, to draw up exact inventories of all property confiscated, and to protect in the strictest revolutionary way all agricultural enterprises transferred to the people, with all buildings, implements, livestock, stocks of produce, etc.

4) The following peasant Mandate, compiled by the newspaper *Izvestia of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies* from 242 local peasant mandates and published in No. 88 of that paper (Petrograd, No. 88, August 19, 1917), shall serve everywhere to guide the implementation of the great land reforms until a final decision on the latter is taken by the Constituent Assembly.

### PEASANT MANDATE ON THE LAND

"The land question in its full scope can be settled only by the popular Constituent Assembly.

"The most equitable settlement of the land question is to be as follows:

"1) *Private ownership of land shall be abolished for ever; land shall not be sold, purchased, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise alienated.*

"All land, whether *state, crown, monastery, church, factory, entailed, private, public, peasant, etc., shall be confiscated without compensation* and become the property of the whole people, and pass into the use of all those who cultivate it.

"Persons who suffer by this property revolution shall be deemed to be entitled to public support only for the period necessary for adaptation to the new conditions of life.

"2) All mineral wealth—ore, oil, coal, salt, etc., and also all forests and waters of state importance, shall pass into the exclusive use of the state. All the small streams, lakes, woods, etc., shall pass into the use of the communes, to be administered by the local self-government bodies.

"3) Lands on which *high-level scientific farming* is practised—orchards, plantations, seed plots, nurseries, hotbouses, etc.—*shall not be divided up, but shall be converted into model farms*, to be turned over for exclusive use *to the state or to the communes*, depending on the size and importance of such lands.

"Household land in towns and villages, with orchards and vegetable gardens, shall be reserved for the use of their present owners, the size of the holdings, and the size of tax levied for the use thereof, to be determined by law.

"4) Stud farms, government and private pedigree stock and poultry farms, etc., shall be confiscated and become the property of the whole people, and pass into the exclusive use of the state or a commune, depending on the size and importance of such farms.

"The question of compensation shall be examined by the Constituent Assembly.

"5) All livestock and farm implements of the confiscated estates shall pass into the exclusive use of the state or a commune, depending on their size and importance, and no compensation shall be paid for this.

"The farm implements of peasants with little land shall not be subject to confiscation.

"6) The right to use the land shall be accorded to all citizens of the Russian state (without distinction of sex) desiring to culti-

vate it by their own labour, with the help of their families, or in partnership, but only as long as they are able to cultivate it. The employment of hired labour is not permitted.

"In the event of the temporary physical disability of any member of a village commune for a period of up to two years, the village commune shall be obliged to assist him for this period by collectively cultivating his land until he is again able to work.

"Peasants who, owing to old age or ill-health, are permanently disabled and unable to cultivate the land personally, shall lose their right to the use of it, but, in return, shall receive a pension from the state.

"7) Land tenure shall be on an equality basis, i.e., the land shall be distributed among the working people in conformity with a labour standard or a subsistence standard, depending on local conditions.

"There shall be absolutely no restriction on the forms of land tenure—household, farm, communal, or co-operative, as shall be decided in each individual village and settlement.

"8) All land, when alienated, shall become part of the national land fund. Its distribution among the peasants shall be in charge of the local and central self-government bodies, from democratically organised village and city communes, in which there are no distinctions of social rank, to central regional government bodies.

"The land fund shall be subject to periodical redistribution, depending on the growth of population and the increase in the productivity and the scientific level of farming.

"When the boundaries of allotments are altered, the original nucleus of the allotment shall be left intact.

"The land of the members who leave the commune shall revert to the land fund; preferential right to such land shall be given to the near relatives of the members who have left, or to persons designated by the latter.

"The cost of fertilisers and improvements put into the land, to the extent that they have not been fully used up at the time the allotment is returned to the land fund, shall be compensated.

"Should the available land fund in a particular district prove inadequate for the needs of the local population, the surplus population shall be settled elsewhere.

"The state shall take upon itself the organisation of resettlement and shall bear the cost thereof, as well as the cost of supplying implements, etc.

"Resettlement shall be effected in the following order: landless peasants desiring to resettle, then members of the commune who are of vicious habits, deserters, and so on, and, finally, by lot or by agreement."

The entire contents of this Mandate, as expressing the absolute will of the vast majority of the class-conscious peasants of all Russia, is proclaimed a provisional law, which, pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, shall be carried into effect as far as possible immediately, and as to certain of its provisions with due gradualness, as shall be determined by the uyezd Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.

5) The land of ordinary peasants and ordinary Cossacks shall not be confiscated.

Voices are being raised here that the decree itself and the Mandate were drawn up by the Socialist-Revolutionaries. What of it? Does it matter who drew them up? As a democratic government, we cannot ignore the decision of the masses of the people, even though we may disagree with it. In the fire of experience, applying the decree in practice, and carrying it out locally, the peasants will themselves realise where the truth lies. And even if the peasants continue to follow the Socialist-Revolutionaries, even if they give this party a majority in the Constituent Assembly, we shall still say—what of it? Experience is the best teacher and it will show who is right. Let the peasants solve this problem from one end and we shall solve it from the other. Experience will oblige us to draw together in the general stream of revolutionary creative work, in the elaboration of new state forms. We must be guided by experience; we must allow complete freedom to the creative facilities of the masses. The old government, which was overthrown by armed uprising, wanted to settle the land problem with the help of the old, unchanged tsarist bureaucracy. But instead of solving the problem, the bureaucracy only fought the peasants. The peasants have learnt something during the eight months of our revolution; they want to settle all land problems themselves. We are therefore opposed to all amendments to

this draft law. We want no details in it, for we are writing a decree, not a programme of action. Russia is vast, and local conditions vary. We trust that the peasants themselves will be able to solve the problem correctly, properly, better than we could do it. Whether they do it in our spirit or in the spirit of the Socialist-Revolutionary programme is not the point. The point is that the peasants should be firmly assured that there are no more landlords in the countryside, that they themselves must decide all questions, and that they themselves must arrange their own lives. (*Loud applause.*)

*Izvestia TsIK* No. 209,  
October 28, 1917  
and *Pravda* No. 171,  
November 10 (October 28), 1917

*Collected Works*,  
Vol. 26, pp. 257-61

### Reply to Questions From Peasants<sup>67</sup>

In reply to numerous questions from peasants, be it known that all power in the country henceforth belongs wholly to the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. The workers' revolution has won in Petrograd and Moscow and is winning everywhere else in Russia. The Workers' and Peasants' Government ensures the alliance of the mass of the peasants, the poor peasants, the majority of the peasants, with the workers against the landlords, against the capitalists.

Hence the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies, primarily the uyezds and then the gubernia Soviets, are from now on, pending the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, vested with full governmental authority in their localities. Landed proprietorship has been *abolished* by the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets. A decree on land has already been issued by the present Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government. In conformity with this decree all landed estates pass over wholly to the Soviets of Peasants' Deputies.

The volost land committees must at once take over the administration of all landed estates, instituting the strictest accounting, maintaining perfect order and safeguarding with utmost strictness the former landlord property, which henceforth is the property of the whole people and which the people themselves must therefore protect.

All rulings of the volost land committees issued with the approval of the uyezd Soviets of Peasants' Deputies have the force of *law* and must be carried out unconditionally and without delay.

The Workers' and Peasants' Government appointed by the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets has been named the Council of People's Commissars.

The Council of People's Commissars calls upon the peasants to take all power into their own hands in their respective localities. The workers give their full, undivided, all-round support to the peasants, are getting the production of machines and implements started, and ask the peasants to help by delivering grain.

*V. Ulyanov (Lenin)*  
Chairman of the Council  
of People's Commissars

Petrograd,  
November 5, 1917

*Izvestia TsIK* No. 219,  
November 8, 1917

*Collected Works,*  
Vol. 26, pp. 299-300

### Draft Resolution

For the Extraordinary All-Russia Congress  
of Soviets of Peasants' Deputies

The Peasants' Congress fully and in every way supports the law (decree) on land of October 26, 1917, approved by the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies and published by the Council of People's Commissars as the provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of the Russian republic. The Peasants' Congress declares its firm and unshakable resolve to insure the implementation of this law, calls upon all peasants to support it unanimously and to carry it out themselves in the localities without delay, and also to elect to all and every responsible post and office only people who have proved not in word but in deed their complete devotion to the interests of the working and exploited peasants, their readiness and ability to uphold these interests against any resistance the landowners, capitalists, and their supporters or accomplices may offer.

The Peasants' Congress also expresses its conviction that the full implementation of all the measures constituting the law on land is possible only if the workers' socialist revolution which began on October 25 is successful, for only the socialist revolution can ensure the transfer of the land to the working peasantry without compensation, the confiscation of the landowners' implements, full protection of the interests of agricultural wage-workers and the immediate commencement of the unconditional abolition of the entire system of capitalist wage-slav-

ery, the proper and planned distribution of the products of both agriculture and industry among the various regions and the population of the country, control over the banks (without such control the people will not be masters of the land even though private property in land is abolished), all-round state assistance specially to the working and exploited people, etc.

Therefore the Peasants' Congress, fully supporting the revolution of October 25, and supporting it precisely as a socialist revolution, declares its unswerving resolve to carry out, with due gradualness but without the slightest vacillation, measures aimed at the socialist transformation of the Russian Republic.

A necessary condition for the victory of the socialist revolution, which alone can secure the lasting triumph and full implementation of the law on land, is the close alliance of the working and exploited peasantry with the working class—the proletariat—in all the advanced countries. In the Russian Republic the entire organisation and administration of the state from top to bottom must henceforth be based on such an alliance. Rejecting all and every attempt, direct and indirect, overt and covert, to return to a course that experience has rejected, to the course of conciliation with the bourgeoisie and the champions of bourgeois policy, this alliance alone can ensure the victory of socialism the world over.

*Izvestia TsIK* No. 226,  
November 15 (28) 1917

*Collected Works*,  
Vol. 26, pp. 327-28

## Alliance Between the Workers and the Working and Exploited Peasants

A Letter to "Pravda"

Today, Saturday, November 18, in the course of a speech I made at the Peasants' Congress I was publicly asked a question to which I forthwith replied. It is essential that this question and my reply should immediately be made known to all the reading public, for while formally speaking only in my own name, I was actually speaking in the name of the whole Bolshevik Party.

The matter was the following.

Touching on the question of an alliance between the Bolshevik workers and the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, whom many peasants at present trust, I argued in my speech that this alliance *can* be an "honest coalition", an honest alliance, for there is *no* radical divergence of interests between the wage-workers and the working and exploited peasants. Socialism is *fully* able to meet the interests of both. *Only* socialism can meet their interests. Hence the possibility and necessity for an "honest coalition" between the proletarians and the working and exploited peasantry. On the contrary, a "coalition" (alliance) between the working and exploited classes, on the one hand, and the bourgeoisie, on the other, *cannot* be an "honest coalition" because of the radical divergence of interests between these classes.

Imagine, I said, that there is a majority of Bolsheviks and a minority of Left Socialist-Revolutionaries in the government, or even, let us assume, only one Left Social-



ist-Revolutionary—the Commissar of Agriculture. Could the Bolsheviks practise an honest coalition under such circumstances?

They could; for while they are irreconcilable in their fight against the counter-revolutionary elements (including the Right Socialist-Revolutionary and the defencist elements), the Bolsheviks would be obliged to *abstain* from voting on questions which concern purely Socialist-Revolutionary points in the land programme approved by the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets. Such, for instance, would be the point on equal land tenure and the redistribution of land among the small holders.

By abstaining from voting on such a point the Bolsheviks would not be changing their programme in the slightest. For, given the victory of socialism (workers' control over the factories, to be followed by their expropriation, the nationalisation of the banks, and the creation of a Supreme Economic Council for the regulation of the entire economic life of the country)—given that the workers *would be obliged* to agree to the transitional measures proposed by the small working and exploited peasants, provided such measures were *not detrimental* to the cause of socialism. Even Kautsky, when he was still a Marxist (1899-1909), frequently admitted—I said—that the measures of transition to socialism cannot be identical in countries with large-scale and those with small-scale farming.

We Bolsheviks would be obliged to abstain from voting when such a point was being decided in the Council of People's Commissars or in the Central Executive Committee, for if the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries (as well as the peasants who support them) agreed to workers' control, to the nationalisation of the banks, etc., equal land tenure would be only one of the measures of *transition* to full socialism. For the proletariat to *impose* such transitional measures would be absurd; it is obliged, in the interests of the victory of socialism, to *yield* to the

small working and exploited peasants in the choice of these transitional measures, for they could do *no harm* to the cause of socialism.

Thereupon, a Left Socialist-Revolutionary (it was Comrade Feofilaktov, if I am not mistaken) asked me the following question:

"How would the Bolsheviks act if in the Constituent Assembly the peasants wanted to pass a law on equal land tenure, while the bourgeoisie were opposed to the peasants and the decision depended on the Bolsheviks?"

I replied: under such circumstances, when the cause of socialism would be ensured by the introduction of workers' control, the nationalisation of the banks, etc., the alliance between the workers and the working and exploited peasants would make it obligatory for the party of the proletariat to vote for the peasants and against the bourgeoisie. The Bolsheviks, in my opinion, would be entitled when the vote was being taken to make a declaration of dissent, to place on record their non-agreement, etc., but to abstain from voting under such circumstances would be to betray their allies *in the fight for socialism* because of a difference with them on a partial issue. The Bolsheviks would never betray the peasants in such a situation. Equal land tenure and like measures *cannot* prejudice socialism if the power is in the hands of a Workers' and Peasants' Government, if workers' control has been introduced, the banks nationalised, a workers' and peasants' supreme economic body set up to direct (regulate) the *entire* economic life of the country, and so forth.

Such was my reply.

Written on November 18  
(December 1), 1917

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December 2 (November 19), 1917

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Vol. 26, pp. 333-35

## On the Famine

### A Letter to the Workers of Petrograd

Comrades, the other day your delegate, a Party comrade, a worker in the Putilov Works, called on me. This comrade drew a detailed and extremely harrowing picture of the famine in Petrograd. We all know that the food situation is just as acute in many of the industrial gubernias, that famine is knocking just as cruelly at the door of the workers and the poor generally.

And side by side with this we observe an orgy of profiteering in grain and other food products. The famine is not due to the fact that there is no grain in Russia, but to the fact that the bourgeoisie and the rich generally are putting up a last decisive fight against the rule of the toilers, against the state of the workers, against Soviet power, on this most important and acute of issues, the issue of bread. The bourgeoisie and the rich generally, including the rural rich, the kulaks, are thwarting the grain monopoly; they are disrupting the distribution of grain undertaken by the state for the purpose and in the interests of supplying bread to the whole of the population, and in the first place to the workers, the toilers, the needy. The bourgeoisie are disrupting the fixed prices, they are profiteering in grain, they are making a hundred, two hundred and more rubles' profit on every pood of grain; they are disrupting the grain monopoly and the proper distribution of grain by resorting to bribery and corruption and by deliberately supporting everything

tending to destroy the power of the workers, which is endeavouring to put into effect the prime, basic and root principle of socialism: "He who does not work, neither shall he eat."

"He who does not work, neither shall he eat"—every toiler understands that. Every worker, every poor and even middle peasant, everybody who has suffered need in his lifetime, everybody who has ever lived by his own labour, is in agreement with this. Nine-tenths of the population of Russia are in agreement with this truth. In this simple, elementary and perfectly obvious truth lies the basis of socialism, the indefeasible source of its strength, the indestructible pledge of its final victory.

But the whole point is that it is one thing to subscribe to this truth, to swear one's allegiance to it, to give it verbal recognition, but it is quite different to be able to put it into effect. When hundreds of thousands and millions of people are suffering the pangs of hunger (in Petrograd, in the non-agricultural gubernias, and in Moscow) in a country where millions upon millions of poods of grain are being concealed by the rich, the kulaks, and the profiteers—in a country which calls itself a socialist Soviet Republic—there is something to which every conscious worker and peasant must give serious and profound thought.

"He who does not work, neither shall he eat"—how is this to be put into effect? It is as clear as daylight that in order to put it into effect we require, first, a state grain monopoly, i.e., the absolute prohibition of all private trade in grain, the compulsory delivery of all surplus grain to the state at a fixed price, the absolute prohibition of all hoarding and concealment of surplus grain, no matter by whom. Secondly, we require the strictest registration of all grain surpluses, faultless organisation of the transportation of grain from places of abundance to places of shortage, and the building up of reserves for consumption, for processing, and for seed. Thirdly, we

require a just and proper distribution of bread, controlled by the workers' state, the proletarian state, among all the citizens of the state, a distribution which will permit of no privileges and advantages for the rich.

One has only to reflect ever so slightly on these conditions for coping with the famine to see the abysmal stupidity of the contemptible anarchist windbags, who deny the necessity of a state power (and, what is more, a power ruthless in its severity towards the bourgeoisie and ruthlessly firm towards disorganisers of government) for the transition from capitalism to communism and for the ridding of the working people of all forms of oppression and exploitation. It is at this moment, when our revolution has directly, concretely, and practically approached the tasks involved in the realisation of socialism—and therein lies its inestimable merit—it is at this moment, and exactly in connection with this most important of issues, the issue of bread, that the need becomes absolutely clear for an iron revolutionary rule, for a dictatorship of the proletariat, for the organisation of the collection of food products, their transportation, and distribution on a mass, national scale, taking into account the requirements of tens and hundreds of millions of people, calculating the conditions and the results of production for a year and many years ahead (for there are sometimes years of crop failure, sometimes land improvements essential for increasing grain crops require years of work, and so forth).

Romanov and Kerensky left to the working class a country utterly impoverished by their predatory, criminal, and most terrible war, a country picked clean by Russian and foreign imperialists. Bread will suffice for all only if we keep the strictest account of every pood, only if every pound is distributed absolutely evenly. There is also an acute shortage of bread for machines, i.e., fuel; the railways and factories will come to a standstill, unem-

ployment and famine will bring ruin on the whole nation, if we do not bend every effort to establish a strict and ruthless economy of consumption and proper distribution. We are faced by disaster, it is very near. An intolerably, difficult May will be followed by a still more difficult June, July and August.

Our state grain monopoly exists in law, but in practice it is being thwarted at every step by the bourgeoisie. The rural rich, the kulak, the parasite who has been robbing the whole neighbourhood for decades, prefers to enrich himself by profiteering and illicit distilling: it is so good for his pocket, and he can throw the blame for the famine on Soviet power. That, too, is the line of the political defenders of the kulak—the Constitutional-Democrats, the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, and the Mensheviks—who are overtly and covertly “working” against the grain monopoly and against Soviet power. The party of the spineless, i.e., the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, are displaying their spinelessness here too: they are yielding to the covetous howls and outcries of the bourgeoisie, they are crying out against the grain monopoly, they are “protesting” against the food dictatorship, they are allowing themselves to be intimidated by the bourgeoisie, they are afraid to fight the kulak, and are flapping about hysterically, recommending that the fixed prices be raised, that private trading be permitted, and so forth.

This party of the spineless reflects in politics something akin to what takes place in ordinary life when the kulak incites the poor peasants against the Soviets, bribes them by, say, letting some poor peasant have a pood of grain not for six, but for three rubles, so that the poor peasant, thus corrupted, may himself “make a bit” by profiteering, may “turn a penny” by selling that pood of grain at a profiteering price of one hundred and fifty rubles, and himself become a decrier of the Soviets, which have prohibited private trading in grain.

Anyone who is capable of reflecting, anyone who is willing to reflect ever so little, will see clearly what line this fight has taken.

Either the advanced and class-conscious workers triumph and unite the poor peasant masses around themselves, establish rigorous order, a mercilessly severe rule, a genuine dictatorship of the proletariat—either they compel the kulak to submit, and institute a proper distribution of food and fuel on a national scale;

—or the bourgeoisie, with the help of the kulaks, and with the indirect support of the spineless and muddle-headed (the anarchists and the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries), will overthrow Soviet power and set up a Russo-German or a Russo-Japanese Kornilov, who will present the people with a sixteen-hour working day, an ounce of bread per week, mass shooting of workers and torture in dungeons, as has been the case in Finland and the Ukraine.

Either—or.

There is no middle course.

The situation of the country is desperate in the extreme.

Anyone who reflects upon political life cannot fail to see that the Constitutional-Democrats, the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries, and the Mensheviks are coming to an understanding about who would be “pleasanter”, a Russo-German or a Russo-Japanese Kornilov,<sup>68</sup> about who would crush the revolution more effectively and reliably, a crowned or a republican Kornilov.

It is time all class-conscious and advanced workers came to an understanding. It is time they bestirred themselves and realised that every minute’s delay may spell ruin to the country and ruin to the revolution.

Half-measures will be of no avail. Complaining will lead us nowhere. Attempts to secure bread or fuel “in retail fashion”, “each man for himself”, i.e., for “our” factory, “our” workshop, are only increasing the disorga-

nisation and facilitating for the profiteers their selfish, filthy, and blackguardly work.

That is why, comrades, workers of Petrograd, I have taken the liberty of addressing this letter to you. Petrograd is not Russia. The Petrograd workers are only a small part of the workers of Russia. But they are one of the best, the advanced, most class-conscious, most revolutionary, most steadfast detachments of the working class and of all the working people of Russia, and one of the least liable to succumb to empty phrases, to spineless despair and to the intimidation of the bourgeoisie. And it has frequently happened at critical moments in the life of nations that even small advanced detachments of advanced classes have carried the rest with them, have fired the masses with revolutionary enthusiasm, and have accomplished tremendous historical feats.

“There were forty thousand of us at the Putilov Works,” the delegate from the Petrograd workers said to me. “But the majority of them were ‘temporary’ workers, not proletarians, an unreliable, flabby lot. Now there are fifteen thousand left, but these are proletarians, tried and steeled in the fight.”

That is the sort of vanguard of the revolution—in Petrograd and throughout the country—that must sound the call, must *rise together*, must understand that the salvation of the country is in their hands; that from them is demanded a heroism no less than that which they displayed in January and October 1905 and in February and October 1917, that a great “*crusade*” must be organised against the grain profiteers, the kulaks, the parasites, the disorganisers and bribe-takers, a great “*crusade*” against the violators of strictest state order in the collection, transportation, and distribution of bread for the people and bread for the machines.

The country and the revolution can be saved only by the mass effort of the advanced workers. We need tens of

thousands of advanced and steeled proletarians, class-conscious enough to explain matters to the millions of poor peasants all over the country and to assume the leadership of these millions, resolute enough to ruthlessly cast out of their midst and shoot all who allow themselves to be "tempted"—as indeed happens—by the temptations of profiteering and turn from fighters for the cause of the people into robbers; we need proletarians steadfast enough and devoted enough to the revolution to bear in an organised way all the hardships of the *crusade* and take it to every corner of the country for the establishment of order, for the consolidation of the local organs of Soviet power, and for the exercise of control in the localities over every pood of grain and every pood of fuel.

It is rather more difficult to do this than to display heroism for a few days without leaving one's accustomed place, without joining in a crusade, confining oneself to an impulsive uprising against the idiot monster Romanov or the fool and braggart Kerensky. Heroism displayed in prolonged and persevering organisational work on a national scale is immensely more difficult than, but at the same time immensely superior to, heroism displayed in an uprising. But the strength of working-class parties, the strength of the working class has always been that it looks danger boldly, squarely and openly in the face, that it does not fear to admit danger and soberly weighs the forces in "our" camp and in "the other" camp, the camp of the exploiters. The revolution is progressing, developing, and growing. The tasks we face are also growing. The struggle is broadening and deepening. Proper distribution of bread and fuel, their procurement in greater quantities and the very strict account and control of them by *the workers* on a national scale—that is the real and chief prelude to socialism. That is no longer a "general revolutionary" task but a *communist* task, a task which requires that the working people and the poor engage capitalism in a decisive battle.

And this battle is worth giving all one's strength to it; the difficulties are great, but so is the cause of the abolition of oppression and exploitation for which we are fighting.

When the people are starving, when unemployment is becoming ever more terrible, anyone who conceals an extra pood of grain, anyone who deprives the state of a pood of fuel is an out-and-out criminal.

At such a time—and for a genuinely communist society, it is always true—every pood of grain and fuel is veritably sacred, much more so than the sacred things which priests use to confuse the minds of fools, promising them the kingdom of heaven as a reward for slavery on earth. And in order to rid this genuinely sacred thing of every remnant of the "sacredness" of the priests, we must *take possession of it practically*, we must achieve its proper distribution *in practice*, we must collect the whole of it without exception; every particle of surplus grain must be brought into the state stores, *the whole country must be swept clean* of concealed or ungarnered grain surpluses; we need the firm hand of the worker to harness every effort to increase the output of fuel and to secure the greatest economy of fuel, the greatest efficiency in its transportation and consumption.

We need a mass "crusade" of the advanced workers to every centre of production of grain and fuel, to every important centre of supply and distribution—a mass "crusade" to increase the intensity of work tenfold, to assist the local organs of Soviet power in the matter of accounting and control, and to eradicate profiteering, graft, and slovenliness by armed force. This is not a new task. History, properly speaking, is not advancing new tasks—all it is doing is to increase the size and scope of old tasks as the scope of the revolution, its difficulties, and the greatness of its world-historic aim increase.

One of the greatest and indefeasible accomplishments of the October Revolution—the Soviet revolution—is that

the advanced worker, *as the leader of the poor, as the leader of the toiling masses of the countryside, as the builder of the state of the toilers*, has "gone among the people". Petrograd and other proletarian centres have given thousands upon thousands of their best workers to the countryside. The detachments of fighters against the Kaledins and Dutovs, and the food detachments, are nothing new. Only the proximity of disaster, the acuteness of the situation compel us to do *ten times more* than before.

When the worker became the vanguard leader of the poor he did not thereby become a saint. He led the people forward, but he also became infected with the diseases of petty-bourgeois disintegration. The fewer the detachments of best organised, of most class-conscious, and most disciplined and steadfast workers were, the more frequently did these detachments degenerate, the more frequently did the small-proprietor instincts of the past triumph over the proletarian-communist consciousness of the future.

Having begun the communist revolution, the working class cannot instantly discard the weaknesses and vices inherited from the society of landowners and capitalists, the society of exploiters and parasites, the society based on the filthy selfishness and personal gain of a few and the poverty of the many. But the working class can vanquish the old world—and in the end will certainly and inevitably vanquish it—with its vices and weaknesses, if against the enemy are brought ever greater detachments of workers, ever more enlightened by experience and tempered by the hardships of the struggle.

Such and only such is the state of affairs in Russia today. Single-handed and disunited, we shall not be able to cope with famine and unemployment. We need a mass "crusade" of advanced workers to every corner of this vast country. We need ten times more *iron detachments* of the proletariat, class-conscious and boundlessly devoted to communism. Then we shall triumph over famine and un-

employment. Then we shall make the revolution the real prelude to socialism, and then, too, we shall be in a position to conduct a victorious war of defence against the imperialist vultures.

*N. Lenin*

May 22, 1918

*Pravda* No. 101,  
May 24, 1918

*Collected Works*,  
Vol. 27, pp. 391-98

**Draft of Telegram  
to All Soviets of Deputies Concerning  
the Worker-Peasant Alliance**

The Poor Peasants' Committees<sup>69</sup> are necessary to fight the kulaks, the rich, the exploiters, who shackle the working peasants. But between the kulaks, who are a small minority, and the poor or semi-proletarians there is the section of the middle peasants. The Soviet government has never declared or conducted any struggle against them. Any steps or measures to the contrary must be condemned most vigorously and stopped. The socialist government must pursue a policy of agreement with the middle peasants. The Soviet government has time and again shown by its actions that it is firmly resolved to pursue this policy. The most important of such actions are the adoption by a Communist (Bolshevik) majority of the law on the socialisation of land<sup>70</sup> and its strictly faithful enforcement, followed by the trebling of grain prices (decree of August . . . , 1918). The purport of the decree on agricultural machinery,<sup>71</sup> etc., is the same. The policy set forth above is strictly binding on everyone.

Written August 16, 1918

First published in 1931

*Collected Works,*  
Vol. 28, p. 59

**Speech at a Meeting of Delegates  
From the Poor Peasants'  
Committees  
of Central Gubernias**

*November 8, 1918*

Comrades, the organisation of the poor peasants is the key problem in our internal construction work, and even in our whole revolution.

The aim of the October Revolution was to wrench the factories from the hands of the capitalists so as to make the means of production the property of the whole people, and to reconstruct agriculture on socialist lines by handing over the land to the peasants.

The first part of this aim was much easier to accomplish than the second. In the cities, the revolution was dealing with large-scale industry employing tens and hundreds of thousands of workers. The factories belonged to a small number of capitalists, who gave the workers little trouble. The workers had already gained experience in their long struggle against the capitalists, which had taught them to act concertedly, resolutely, and in an organised way. Moreover, they did not have to split up the factories; the thing that mattered was to make all production serve the interests of the working class and the peasants and see that the products of labour should not fall into capitalist hands.

But agriculture is quite a different proposition. A number of transitional measures are required if socialism is to win here. To transform a vast number of small peasant farms into large farms is something that cannot be done immediately. Agriculture, which has hitherto been con-

ducted on a haphazard basis, cannot immediately or in a short space of time be socialised and transformed into large-scale state enterprise, whose produce would be equally and justly distributed among all working people under a system of universal and equal labour service.

While the factory workers in the cities have already succeeded in completely overthrowing the capitalists and getting rid of exploitation, in the countryside the real fight against exploitation has only just begun.

After the October Revolution we finished off the landowner and took away his land. That, however, did not end the rural struggle. Gaining the land, like every other workers' gain, can only be secure when it is based on the independent action of the working people themselves, on their own organisation, on their endurance and revolutionary determination.

Did the peasants have this organisation?

Unfortunately not. And that is the trouble, the reason why the struggle is so difficult.

Peasants who do not employ the labour of others, who do not profit at the expense of others, will, of course, always be in favour of the land being divided among all equally, of everybody working, of land tenure not serving as a basis of exploitation; they are against the concentration of land in the hands of a few. But it is different with the kulaks and the parasites who grew rich on the war, who took advantage of the famine to sell grain at fabulous prices, who concealed grain in anticipation of higher prices, and who are now doing all they can to grow rich on the people's misfortunes and on the starvation of the village poor and urban workers.

They, the kulaks and parasites, are no less formidable enemies than the capitalists and landowners. And if the kulaks are not dealt with properly, if we do not cope with the parasites, the return of the tsar and the capitalists is inevitable.

The experience of every revolution that has occurred in Europe offers striking corroboration of the fact that revolution is inevitably doomed if the peasants do not throw off the domination of the kulaks.

Every European revolution ended in failure because the peasants could not cope with their enemies. In the cities the workers overthrew their kings (in England and France they executed their kings several centuries ago; it was only we who were late with our tsar), yet after a certain interval the old order came back. That was because in those days even in the cities there was no large-scale industry which could unite millions of workers in the factories and weld them into an army powerful enough to withstand the onslaught of the capitalists and the kulaks even without peasant support.

The poor peasants were unorganised, fought the kulaks badly, and as a result the revolution was defeated in the cities as well.

Now the situation is different. During the last two hundred years large-scale production has developed so powerfully and has covered all countries with such a network of huge factories employing thousands and tens of thousands of workers that today everywhere in the cities there are many organised workers, the proletarians, who constitute a force strong enough to achieve final victory over the bourgeoisie, the capitalists.

In former revolutions the poor peasants had nowhere to turn for support in their difficult struggle against the kulaks.

The organised proletariat—which is stronger and more experienced than the peasants (having gained experience in earlier struggles)—now holds power in Russia and possesses all the means of production, the mills, factories, railways, ships, etc.

Now the poor peasants have a reliable and powerful ally in their anti-kulak struggle. They know that the town is behind them, that the proletariat will help them, and



is in fact already helping them with every means in its power. That has been shown by recent events.

You all remember, comrades, in what a dangerous situation the revolution was this July. The Czech revolt<sup>72</sup> was spreading, the food shortage in the cities was worsening and the kulaks were becoming more insolent and violent than ever in their attacks on the towns, the Soviet government and the poor peasants.

We appealed to the poor peasants to organise. We proceeded to form Poor Peasants' Committees and organise workers' food detachments. The Left Socialist-Revolutionaries started an uprising. They said the Poor Peasants' Committees consisted of idlers and the workers were robbing the working peasants of grain.

We replied that they were defending the kulaks, who realised that the Soviet government could be fought by starvation as well as arms. They talked about "idlers". And we asked, "But why does an individual become an 'idler', why does he deteriorate, why is he impoverished, and why does he take to drink? Isn't it because of the kulaks?" The kulaks, in unison with the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries, raised an outcry against "idlers", but they themselves were raking in grain, concealing it and profiteering because they wanted to grow rich on the starvation and suffering of the workers.

The kulaks were squeezing the poor peasants dry. They were profiting from the labour of others, at the same time crying, "Idlers!"

The kulaks waited impatiently for the Czechs. They would most willingly have enthroned a new tsar so as to continue their exploitation with impunity, to continue to dominate the farm labourer and to continue to grow rich.

The only salvation was in the village uniting with the town, the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians (those who do not employ the labour of others) joining the town workers in a campaign against the kulaks and parasites.

To achieve this unity a great deal had to be done about

the food situation. The workers in the towns were starving, while the kulak said: "If I hold my grain back a bit longer they may pay more."

The kulaks, of course, are in no hurry; they have plenty of money; they say themselves they have tons of Kerensky notes.<sup>73</sup>

But people who during famine can conceal and hoard grain are vicious criminals. They must be fought as the worst enemies of the people.

And we have begun this fight in the countryside.

The Mensheviks and S.R.s tried to frighten us by saying that in forming the Poor Peasants' Committees we were splitting the peasants. But if we don't split the peasants? The countryside will be left at the kulak's mercy. And that is exactly what we do not want, so we decided to split them. We said: true, we are losing the kulaks—we cannot avoid that misfortune (*laughter*)—but we shall win thousands and millions of poor peasants who will side with the workers. (*Applause.*)

And that is exactly what is taking place. The split among the peasants only served to bring out more clearly who are the poor peasants, who are the middle peasants not employing the labour of others, and who are the parasites and kulaks.

The workers have been helping the poor peasants in their struggle against the kulaks. In the civil war that has flared up in the countryside the workers are on the side of the poor peasants, as they were when they passed the S.R.-sponsored law on the socialisation of the land.

We Bolsheviks were opposed to this law. Yet we signed it, because we did not want to oppose the will of the majority of peasants. The majority will is binding on us always, and to oppose the majority will is to betray the revolution.

We did not want to impose on the peasants the idea that the equal division of the land was useless, an idea which was alien to them. Far better, we thought, if, by

their own experience and suffering, the peasants themselves come to realise that equal division is nonsense. Only then could we ask them how they would escape the ruin and kulak domination that follow from the division of the land.

Division of the land was all very well as a beginning. Its purpose was to show that the land was being taken from the landowners and handed over to the peasants. But that is not enough. The solution lies only in socialised farming.

You did not realise this at the time, but you are coming round to it by force of experience. The way to escape the disadvantages of small-scale farming lies in communes, artels or peasant associations. That is the way to improve agriculture, economise forces and combat the kulaks, parasites and exploiters.

We were well aware that the peasants live rooted to the soil. The peasants fear innovations and tenaciously cling to old habits. We knew the peasants would only believe in the benefits of any particular measure when their own common sense led them to understand and appreciate the benefits. And that is why we helped to divide the land, although we realised this was no solution.

Now the poor peasants themselves are beginning to agree with us. Experience is teaching them that while ten ploughs, say, are required when the land is divided into one hundred separate holdings, a smaller number suffices under communal farming because the land is not divided up so minutely. A commune permits a whole artel or association to make improvements in agriculture that are beyond the capacity of individual small owners, and so on.

Of course, it will not be possible to change everywhere to socialised farming immediately. The kulaks will put up every resistance—and frequently the peasants themselves stubbornly resist the introduction of communal farming principles. But the more the peasants are convinced by

example and by their own experience of the advantages of communes, the greater progress will be.

The Poor Peasants' Committees have an immensely important part to play. They must cover the whole of Russia. For some time their development has been quite rapid. The other day a Congress of Poor Peasants' Committees of the Northern Region was held in Petrograd. Instead of the 7,000 representatives expected, 20,000 actually turned up, and the hall booked for the purpose could not accommodate them all. The fine weather came to the rescue and the meeting was held in the square outside the Winter Palace.

The Congress showed that the rural civil war is being properly understood: the poor peasants are uniting and fighting together against the kulaks, the rich and the parasites.

Our Party Central Committee has drawn up a plan for reforming the Poor Peasants' Committees which will be submitted for the approval of the Sixth Congress of Soviets. We have decided that the Poor Peasants' Committees and the rural Soviets must not exist separately, otherwise there will be squabbling and too much useless talk. We shall merge the Poor Peasants' Committees with the Soviets and turn the Poor Peasants' Committees into Soviets.

We know kulaks sometimes worm their way even into the Poor Peasants' Committees. If this continues the poor peasants will have the same sort of attitude towards the Committees as they had towards the kulak Soviets of Kerensky and Avksentyev. A change of name will fool nobody. It is therefore proposed to hold new elections to the Poor Peasants' Committees. The right to vote will only go to those who do not exploit the labour of others, who do not make the starving people a source of plunder, and who do not profiteer on or conceal grain surpluses. There must be no place for kulaks and parasites in the proletarian Poor Peasants' Committees.

The Soviet government has decided to assign one thousand million rubles to a special fund for improving farming. All existing and newly formed communes will receive monetary and technical assistance.

We shall send trained experts if they are required. Although most of these experts are counter-revolutionary, and Poor Peasants' Committees should be able to harness them and they will work for the people no worse than they used to work for the exploiters. Our specialists are now quite sure they cannot overthrow the workers' government by sabotage or wilful damage to work.

We are not afraid of foreign imperialism either. Germany has already hurt her fingers in the Ukraine. Instead of the sixty million poods of grain which Germany hoped to carry off from the Ukraine, she got only nine million poods, and Russian Bolshevism into the bargain, for which she was not so keen. (*Storm of applause.*) The British should watch out the same thing does not happen to them. We might warn them not to choke themselves! (*Laughter and applause.*)

The danger, however, continues to exist as long as our brothers abroad have not everywhere rebelled. And we must therefore continue to organise and strengthen our Red Army. The poor peasants should be particularly concerned in this matter for they can only carry on farming under the protection of our army.

Comrades, the transition to the new form of agriculture may perhaps proceed slowly, but the beginnings of communal farming must be carried into practice unswervingly.

There must be no let-up in the fight against the kulaks, and no deals must be made with them.

We can work together with the middle peasants, and with them fight the kulaks. We have nothing against the middle peasants. They may not be socialists, and may never become socialists, but experience will teach them the advantages of socialised farming and the majority of them will not resist.

We tell the kulaks: We have nothing against you either, but hand over your surplus grain, don't profiteer and don't exploit the labour of others. Until you do so we shall hit you with everything we've got.

We are taking nothing from the working peasants; but we shall completely expropriate all those who employ hired labour and who grow rich at the expense of others. (*Stormy applause.*)

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### The Valuable Admissions of Pitirim Sorokin

*Pravda* today carries a remarkably interesting letter by Pitirim Sorokin, to which the special attention of all Communists should be drawn. In this letter, which was originally published in *Izvestia of the North Dvina Executive Committee*, Pitirim Sorokin announces that he is leaving the Right Socialist-Revolutionary Party and relinquishing his seat in the Constituent Assembly. His motives are that he finds it difficult to provide effective political recipes, not only for others, but even for himself, and that therefore he "is withdrawing completely from politics". He writes: "The past year of revolution has taught me one truth: politicians may make mistakes, politics may be socially useful, but may also be socially harmful, whereas scientific and educational work is always useful and is always needed by the people..." The letter is signed: "Pitirim Sorokin, lecturer at St. Petersburg University and the Psycho-Neurological Institute, former member of the Constituent Assembly and former member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party".

This letter is worth mentioning in the first place because it is an extremely interesting "human document". We do not often meet such sincerity and frankness as are displayed by Sorokin in admitting the mistakenness of his politics. In practically the majority of cases politicians who become convinced that the line they have been pursuing is erroneous try to conceal their change of front, to hush it

up, to "invent" more or less extraneous motives, and so on. A frank and honest admission of one's political error is in itself an important political act. Pitirim Sorokin is wrong when he says that scientific work "is always useful". For mistakes are made in this sphere too, and there are examples also in Russian literature of the obstinate advocacy of, for instance, reactionary philosophical views by people who are not conscious reactionaries. On the other hand, a frank declaration by a prominent person—i.e., a person who has occupied a responsible political post known to the people at large—that he is withdrawing from politics is *also politics*. An honest confession of a political error may be of great political benefit to many people if the error was shared by whole parties which at one time enjoyed influence over the people.

The political significance of Pitirim Sorokin's letter is very great precisely at the present moment. It is a "lesson" which we should all seriously think over and learn thoroughly.

It is a truth long known to every Marxist that in every capitalist society the only *decisive* forces are the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, while all social elements occupying a position between these classes and coming within the economic category of the petty bourgeoisie *inevitably* vacillate between these decisive forces. But there is an enormous gulf between academic recognition of this truth and the ability to draw the conclusions that follow from it in the complex conditions of practical reality.

Pitirim Sorokin is representative of the Menshevik-Socialist-Revolutionary trend, an extremely broad public and political trend. That this is a single trend, that the difference between the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries in their attitude towards the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is insignificant, is especially convincingly and strikingly borne out by the events in the Russian revolution since February 1917. The Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries are varieties of

petty-bourgeois democrats—that is the economic essence and fundamental political characteristic of the trend in question. We know from the history of the advanced countries how frequently this trend in its early stages assumes a “socialist” hue.

What was it that several months ago so forcibly repelled those of this trend from the Bolsheviks, from the proletarian revolution and what is it that is now inducing them to shift from hostility to neutrality? It is quite obvious that the cause of this shift was, firstly, the collapse of German imperialism in connection with the revolution in Germany and other countries, and the exposure of Anglo-French imperialism, and, secondly, the dispelling of bourgeois-democratic illusions.

Let us deal with the first cause. Patriotism is one of the most deeply ingrained sentiments, inculcated by the existence of separate fatherlands for hundreds and thousands of years. One of the most pronounced, one might say exceptional, difficulties of our proletarian revolution is that it was obliged to pass through a phase of extreme departure from patriotism, the phase of the Brest-Litovsk Peace.<sup>74</sup> The bitterness, resentment, and violent indignation provoked by this peace were easy to understand and it goes without saying that we Marxists could expect only the class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat to appreciate the truth that we were making and were obliged to make great national sacrifices for the sake of the supreme interests of the world proletarian revolution. There was no source from which ideologists who are not Marxists, and the broad mass of the working people, who do not belong to the proletariat trained in the long school of strikes and revolution, could derive either a firm conviction that the revolution was maturing, or an unreserved devotion to it. At best, our tactics appeared to them a fantastic, fanatical, and adventurist sacrifice of the real and most obvious interests of hundreds of millions for the sake of an abstract, utopian, and dubious hope of something that might occur

abroad. And the petty bourgeois, owing to their economic position, are more patriotic than the bourgeois or the proletariat.

*But it turned out as we had said.*

German imperialism, which had seemed to be the only enemy, collapsed. The German revolution, which had appeared to be a “dream-farce” (to use Plekhanov’s expression), became a fact. Anglo-French imperialism, which the fantasy of the petty-bourgeois democrats had pictured as a friend of democracy and a protector of the oppressed, turned out to be a savage beast which imposed on the German Republic and the people of Austria terms worse than those of Brest, a savage beast which used armies of “free” republicans—French and American—as gendarmes, butchers and throttlers of the independence and freedom of small and weak nations. Anglo-French imperialism was exposed by world history with ruthless thoroughness and frankness. The facts of world history demonstrated to the Russian patriots, who formerly would hear of nothing that was not to the direct advantage (as formerly understood) of their country, that the transformation of our Russian revolution into a socialist revolution was not a dubious venture but a necessity, for *there was no other* alternative: Anglo-French and American imperialism will *inevitably* destroy the independence and freedom of Russia *if* the world socialist revolution, world Bolshevism, does not triumph.

Facts are stubborn things, as the English say. And during recent months we have witnessed facts that signify a most momentous turning-point in world history. These facts are compelling the petty-bourgeois democrats of Russia, in spite of their hatred of Bolshevism, a hatred inculcated by the history of our inner-Party struggle, to turn from hostility to Bolshevism first to neutrality and then to support of Bolshevism. The objective conditions which repelled these democratic patriots from us most strongly have now vanished. The objective conditions existing in

the world now *compel* them to turn to us. Pitirim Sorokin's change of front is by no means fortuitous, but rather the symptom of an inevitable change of front on the part of a *whole class*, of the whole petty-bourgeois democracy. Whoever fails to reckon with this fact and to take advantage of it is a bad socialist, not a Marxist.

Furthermore, faith in "democracy" *in general*, as a universal panacea, and failure to understand that this democracy is *bourgeois* democracy, historically limited in its usefulness and its necessity, have for decades and centuries been particularly characteristic of the petty bourgeoisie of all countries. The big bourgeois is case-hardened; he knows that under capitalism a democratic republic, like every other form of state, is nothing but a machine for the suppression of the proletariat. The big bourgeois *knows* this from his most intimate acquaintance with the real leaders and with the most profound (and therefore frequently the most concealed) springs of *every* bourgeois state machine. The petty bourgeois, owing to his economic position and his conditions of life generally, is less able to appreciate this truth, and even cherishes the illusion that a democratic republic implies "pure democracy", "a free people's state", the non-class or supra-class rule of the people, a pure manifestation of the will of the people, and so on and so forth. The tenacity of these prejudices of the petty-bourgeois democrat is inevitably due to the fact that he is farther removed from the acute class struggle, the stock exchange, and "real" politics; and it would be absolutely un-Marxist to expect these prejudices to be eradicated very rapidly by propaganda alone.

World history, however, is moving with such furious rapidity, is smashing everything customary and established with a hammer of such immense weight, by crises of such unparalleled intensity, that the most tenacious prejudices are giving way. The naïve belief in a Constituent Assembly and the naïve habit of contrasting "pure democracy" with "proletarian dictatorship" took

shape naturally and inevitably in the mind of the "democrat in general". But the experiences of the Constituent Assembly supporters in Archangel, Samara, Siberia and the South could not but destroy even the most tenacious of prejudices. The idealised democratic republic of Wilson *proved* in practice to be a form of the most rabid imperialism, of the most shameless oppression and suppression of weak and small nations. The average "democrat" in general, the Menshevik and the Socialist-Revolutionary, thought: "How can we even dream of some allegedly superior type of state, some Soviet government? God grant us even an ordinary democratic republic!" And, of course, in "ordinary", comparatively peaceful times he could have kept on cherishing this "hope" for many a long decade.

Now, however, the course of world events and the bitter lessons derived from the alliance of all the Russian monarchists with Anglo-French and American imperialism are proving *in practice* that a democratic republic is a bourgeois-democratic republic, which is already out of date from the point of view of the problems which imperialism has placed before history. They show that there is no *other* alternative: *either* Soviet government triumphs in every advanced country in the world, *or* the most reactionary imperialism triumphs, the most savage imperialism, which is throttling the small and weak nations and reinstating reaction all over the world—Anglo-American imperialism, which has perfectly mastered the art of using the form of a democratic republic.

One or the other.

There is no middle course. Until quite recently this view was regarded as the blind fanaticism of the Bolsheviks.

*But it turned out to be true.*

If Pitirim Sorokin has relinquished his seat in the Constituent Assembly, it is not without reason; it is a symptom of a change of front on the part of a whole class,

the petty-bourgeois democrats. A split among them is inevitable: one section will come over to our side, another section will remain neutral, while a third will deliberately join forces with the monarchist Constitutional-Democrats, who are selling Russia to Anglo-American capital and seeking to crush the revolution with the aid of foreign bayonets. One of the most urgent tasks of the present day is to take into account and make use of the turn among the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary democrats from hostility to Bolshevism first to neutrality and then to support of Bolshevism.

Every slogan the Party addresses to the people is bound to become petrified, become a dead letter, yet remain valid for many even when the conditions which rendered it necessary have changed. That is an unavoidable evil, and it is impossible to ensure the correctness of Party policy unless we learn to combat and overcome it. The period of our proletarian revolution in which the differences with the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary democrats were particularly acute was a historically necessary period. It was impossible to avoid waging a vigorous struggle against these democrats when they swung to the camp of our enemies and set about restoring a *bourgeois and imperialist* democratic republic. Many of the slogans of this struggle have now become frozen and petrified and *prevent* us from properly assessing and taking effective advantage of the new period, in which a change of front has begun among these democrats, a change in our direction, not a fortuitous change, but one rooted deep in the conditions of the international situation.

It is not enough to encourage this change of front and amicably greet those who are making it. A politician who knows what he is working for must learn to *bring about* this change of front among the various sections and groups of the broad mass of petty-bourgeois democrats if he is convinced that serious and deep-going historical reasons

for such a turn exist. A revolutionary proletarian must know whom to suppress and with whom—and when and how—to conclude an agreement. It would be ridiculous and foolish to refrain from employing terror against and suppressing the landowners and capitalists and their henchmen, who are selling Russia to the foreign imperialist “Allies”. It would be farcical to attempt to “convince” or generally to “psychologically influence” them. But it would be equally foolish and ridiculous—if not more so—to insist only on tactics of suppression and terror in relation to the petty-bourgeois democrats when the course of events is compelling them to turn in our direction.

The proletariat encounters these democrats everywhere. Our task in the rural districts is to destroy the landowner and smash the resistance of the exploiter and the kulak profiteer. For this purpose we can safely rely *only* on the semi-proletarians, the “poor peasants”. But the middle peasant is not our enemy. He wavered, is wavering, and will continue to waver. The task of influencing the waverers is *not identical* with the task of overthrowing the exploiter and defeating the active enemy. The task at the present moment is to come to an agreement with the middle peasant—while not for a moment renouncing the struggle against the kulak and at the same time firmly relying solely on the poor peasant—for a turn in our direction on the part of the middle peasants is now inevitable owing to the causes enumerated above.

This applies also to the handicraftsman, the artisan, and the worker whose conditions are most petty-bourgeois or whose views are most petty-bourgeois, and to many office workers and army officers, and, in particular, to the intellectuals generally. It is an unquestionable fact that there often are instances in our Party of inability to make use of this change of front among them and that this inability can and must be overcome.



We already have the firm support of the vast majority of the proletarians organised in the trade unions. We must know how to win over the least proletarian and most petty-bourgeois sections of the *working people* who are turning towards us, to include them in the general organisation and to subject them to general proletarian discipline. The slogan of the moment here is not to fight these sections, but to win them over, to be able to influence them, to convince the waverers, to make use of those who are neutral, and, by mass proletarian influence, to educate those who are lagging behind or who have only very recently begun to free themselves from "Constituent Assembly" or "patriotic-democratic" illusions.

We already have sufficiently firm support among the working people. This was quite strikingly borne out by the Sixth Congress of Soviets. We are not afraid of the bourgeois intellectuals, but we shall not for a moment relax the struggle against the deliberate saboteurs and whiteguards among them. But the slogan of the moment is to make use of the change of attitude towards us which is taking place among them. There still remain plenty of the worst bourgeois specialists who have wormed themselves into Soviet positions. To throw them out, to replace them by specialists who yesterday were our convinced enemies and today are only neutral is one of the most important tasks of the present moment, the task of every active Soviet functionary who comes into contact with the "specialists", of every agitator, propagandist, and organiser.

Of course, like every other political action in a complex and rapidly changing situation, agreement with the middle peasant, with the worker who was a Menshevik yesterday and with the office worker or specialist who was a saboteur yesterday, takes skill to achieve. The whole point is not to rest content with the skill we have acquired by previous experience, but *under all circumstances to go on, under all circumstances to strive for*

*something bigger*, under all circumstances to proceed from simpler to more difficult tasks. Otherwise, no progress whatever is possible and in particular no progress is possible in socialist construction.

The other day I was visited by representatives from a congress of delegates of credit co-operative societies. They showed me the congress resolution protesting *against the merger* of the Credit Co-operative Bank with the People's Bank of the Republic. I told them that I stood for agreement with the middle peasants and highly valued even the beginnings of a change in attitude from hostility to neutrality towards the Bolsheviks on the part of the co-operators, but the basis for an agreement could be created only by their consent to the complete merger of their special bank with the single Bank of the Republic. The congress delegates thereupon replaced their resolution by another, which they had the congress adopt, and in which everything hostile to the merger was deleted; *but ... but* what they proposed was a plan for a *special* "credit union" of co-operators, which in fact differed in no way from a special bank! That was ridiculous. Only a fool, of course, will be deceived by such verbiage. But the "failure" of one such ... "attempt" will not affect our policy in the least; we have pursued and will pursue a policy of agreement with the co-operators, the middle peasants, at the same time suppressing every attempt to change the *policy* of the Soviet government and of Soviet socialist construction.

Vacillation on the part of the petty-bourgeois democrats is inevitable. It was enough for the Czechs to win a few victories for these democrats to fall into a panic, to begin to spread panic, to hasten to the side of the "victors", and be ready to greet them in a servile manner. Of course, it must not be forgotten for a moment that now, too, any partial success of, let us say, the Anglo-American-Krasnov<sup>75</sup> whiteguards would be enough for vacillation to begin in the other direction, increasing



panic and multiplying cases of the dissemination of panic, of treachery, and desertion to the imperialists, and so on and so forth.

We are aware of that. We shall not forget it. The purely proletarian basis we have won for the Soviet government, which is supported by the semi-proletarians, will remain firm and enduring. Our ranks will not falter, our army will not waver—that we already know from experience. But when profound world-historic changes bring about an inevitable turn in our direction among the mass of non-Party, Menshevik, and Socialist-Revolutionary democrats, we must learn and shall learn to make use of this change of front, to encourage it, to induce it among the various groups and sections of the population, to do everything possible to reach agreement with them and thus facilitate the work of socialist construction and ease the burden of grievous economic dislocation, ignorance, and incompetence which are delaying the victory of socialism.

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### Speech to the First All-Russia Congress of Land Departments, Poor Peasants' Committees and Communes

December 11, 1918

(*Loud applause passing into ovation.*) Comrades, the composition of this Congress, in my opinion, is in itself an indication of the profound change that has taken place and the great progress we, the Soviet Republic, have made in building socialism, in particular in agricultural relations, which are of the utmost importance to our country. This Congress consists of representatives of the land departments, the Poor Peasants' Committees and the agricultural communes, a combination which shows that within a short space of time, within a single year, our revolution has made great strides in recasting those relations that are the most difficult to recast and which in all previous revolutions constituted the greatest hindrance to the cause of socialism, but which must be most fully recast to ensure the triumph of socialism.

The first stage in the development of our revolution since October was mainly devoted to defeating the common enemy of all the peasants, the landowners.

Comrades, you are all very well aware that even the February Revolution—the revolution of the bourgeoisie, the revolution of the compromisers—promised the peasants victory over the landowners, and that this promise was not fulfilled. Only the October Revolution, only the victory of the urban working class, only the Soviet government could relieve the whole of Russia, from end to

end, of the ulcer of the old feudal heritage, the old feudal exploitation, landed estates and the landowners' oppression of the peasants as a whole, of all peasants without distinction.

This fight against the landowners was one in which all the peasants were bound to participate, and participate they did. The fight united the poor peasants, who do not live by exploiting the labour of others. But it also united the most prosperous and even wealthy peasants, who cannot get along without hired labour.

As long as our revolution was occupied with this task, as long as we had to exert every effort for the independent movement of the peasants, aided by the urban workers' movement, to sweep away and completely destroy the power of the landowners, the revolution remained a general peasant revolution and could therefore not go beyond bourgeois limits.

It had still not touched the more powerful and more modern enemy of all working people—capital. It therefore ran the risk of ending halfway, like the majority of the revolutions in Western Europe, in which a temporary alliance of the urban workers and all the peasants succeeded in sweeping away the monarchy and the survivals of medievalism, in more or less thoroughly sweeping away the landed estates or the power of the landowners, but never succeeded in undermining the actual foundations of the power of capital.

Our revolution began to tackle this much more important and much more difficult task this summer and autumn. The wave of counter-revolutionary uprisings which arose this summer—when the attack of the West-European imperialists and their Czech hirelings on Russia was joined by all the exploiting and oppressing elements in Russian life— injected a new spirit and fresh life in the countryside.

In practice, all these revolts united the European imperialists, their Czech hirelings, and all those in Russia

who remained on the side of the landowners and capitalists, united them in a desperate struggle against the Soviet government. These revolts were followed by the revolt of all the village kulaks.

The village was no longer united. The peasants, who had fought as one man against the landowners, now split into two camps—the camp of the more prosperous peasants and the camp of the poor peasants who, side by side with the workers, continued their steadfast advance towards socialism and changed from fighting the landowners to fighting capital, the power of money, and the use of the great land reform for the benefit of the kulaks. This struggle cut the property-owning and exploiting classes off from the revolution completely; it definitely put our revolution on the socialist road which the urban working class had tried so hard and vigorously to put it on in October, but along which it will not be able to direct the revolution successfully unless it finds firm, deliberate and solid support in the countryside.

There lies the significance of the revolution which took place this summer and autumn even in the most remote villages of Russia, a revolution which was not spectacular, not as striking and obvious as the October Revolution of last year, but whose significance is incomparably deeper and greater.

The formation of the Poor Peasants' Committees in the rural districts was the turning-point; it showed that the urban working class, which in October had united with all the peasants to crush the landowners, the principal enemy of the free, socialist Russia of the working people, had progressed from this to the much more difficult and historically more noble and truly socialist task—that of carrying the enlightening socialist struggle into the rural districts, and reaching the minds of the peasants as well. The great agrarian revolution—proclamation in October of the abolition of private ownership of land, proclamation of the socialisation of the land—would have inevi-

tably remained a paper revolution if the urban workers had not stirred into action the rural proletariat, the poor peasants, the working peasants, who constitute the vast majority. Like the middle peasants, they do not exploit the labour of others and are not interested in exploitation. They are therefore capable of advancing, and have already advanced, beyond the joint struggle against the landowners to the general proletarian struggle against capital, against the rule of the exploiters, who rely on the power of money and property. They have progressed from sweeping Russia clean of landowners to establishing a socialist system.

This, comrades, was an extremely difficult step to take. Those who doubted the socialist character of our revolution prophesied that this is where we were bound to slip up. Today, however, socialist construction in the countryside depends entirely on this step. The formation of the Poor Peasants' Committees, their wide network throughout Russia, their coming conversion, which in part has already begun, into fully competent rural Soviets that will have to put the fundamental principles of Soviet organisation, the power of the working people, into effect in the rural districts, constitute a real guarantee that we have gone further than the tasks to which ordinary bourgeois-democratic revolutions in West-European countries confined themselves. We have destroyed the monarchy and the medieval power of the landowners, and we are now getting down to the real work of building socialism. This is the most difficult but at the same time the most important and very rewarding work in the countryside. We have got through to the working peasants right in the villages; the wave of capitalist revolts has completely turned them against the capitalist class; the peasants in the Poor Peasants' Committees and in the Soviets which are now undergoing changes are more and more joining forces with the urban workers. In all this we see the sole, yet true and undoubtedly per-

manent guarantee that socialist development in Russia has now become more stable, and has now acquired a basis among the vast mass of the agricultural population.

There is no doubt that building socialism is a very difficult job in a peasant country like Russia. There is no doubt that it was comparatively easy to sweep away an enemy like tsarism, the power of the landowners, the landed estates. At the centre the job could be done in a few days; throughout the country it could be done in a few weeks. But, by its very nature, the task we are now tackling can be accomplished only by extremely persistent and sustained effort. Here we shall have to fight our way step by step, inch by inch. We shall have to fight for every achievement to win a new, socialist Russia; we shall have to fight for collective farming.

It goes without saying that a revolution of this kind, the transition from small individual peasant farms to collective farming, will take some time and can certainly not be accomplished at one stroke.

We know very well that in countries where small peasant farming prevails the transition to socialism cannot be effected except by a series of gradual, preliminary stages. In the light of this, the first aim set by the October Revolution was merely to overthrow and destroy the landowners' power. The February fundamental law on the socialisation of the land, which, as you know, was passed unanimously both by Communists and the non-Communist partners of the Soviet government, was at the same time an expression of the conscious will of the vast majority of the peasants and proof that the working class, the workers' Communist Party, aware of their task, are persistently and patiently advancing towards the new socialist construction—advancing by a series of gradual measures, by awakening the working peasants, and forging ahead only in step with that awakening, only insofar as the peasants are independently organised.

We fully realise that such tremendous changes in the lives of tens of millions of people as the transition from small individual peasant farming to collective farming, affecting as they do the most deep-going roots of the peasants' way of life and their mores, can only be accomplished by long effort, and only when necessity compels people to reshape their lives.

After the long and desperate world war, we can clearly discern the beginnings of a socialist revolution all over the world. This has become a necessity for even the more backward countries and—irrespective of any theoretical views or socialist doctrines—is emphatically bringing it home to everybody that it is impossible to live in the old way.

The country has suffered tremendous ruin and disruption, and we see this disruption spreading all over the world, we see many centuries of man's cultural, scientific and technological achievements swept away in these four years of criminal, destructive and predatory war, and the whole of Europe, not merely Russia alone, returning to a state of barbarism. Now, all common people, particularly the peasants, who have probably suffered most from the war are coming to realise clearly enough that tremendous efforts are required, that every ounce of energy must be exerted to get rid of the legacy of this accursed war which has left us nothing but ruin and want. It is impossible to live in the old way, in the way we lived before the war, and the waste of human toil and effort associated with individual small-scale peasant farming cannot continue. The productivity of labour would be doubled or trebled, there would be a double or triple saving of human labour in agriculture and human activity in general if a transition were made from this scattered small-scale farming to collective farming.

The ruination left by the war simply does not allow us to restore the old small-scale peasant farms. Not only have the mass of the peasants been awakened by the war,

not only has the war shown them what technical marvels now exist and how these marvels have been adapted for people's extermination, but it has also given rise to the idea that these technical marvels must be used primarily to reshape agriculture, the most common form of production in the country, in which the greatest number of people are engaged, but which at the same time is the most backward. Not only has this idea been provoked, but the monstrous horrors of modern warfare have made people realise what forces modern technology has created, how these forces are wasted in awful and senseless war, and that it is the forces of technology themselves that are the only means of salvation from such horrors. It is our obligation and duty to use these forces to give new life to the most backward form of production, agriculture, to reshape it, and to transform it from production conducted in the old, unenlightened way, into production based on science and technical achievements. The war has made people realise this much more than any of us can imagine. But besides this the war has also made it impossible to restore production in the old way.

Those who cherish the hope that after this war the pre-war situation can be restored, that the old system and farming methods can be resumed, are mistaken and are coming to realise their mistake more and more every day. The war has resulted in such terrible ruin that some small farms now possess no draught animals or implements. We cannot allow the waste of people's labour to continue. The poor peasants, who have borne the greatest sacrifices for the revolution and suffered most from the war, did not take the land from the landowners for it to fall into the hands of new kulaks. The latest developments are now confronting these peasants with the question of turning to collective farming as the only means of restoring the agriculture that has been ruined and destroyed by the war. This is the only means of escaping from ignorance and oppression to which capitalism

doomed the entire rural population, due to which the capitalists were able for four years to hurden mankind with war and from which the working people of all countries are now striving with revolutionary energy and fervour to rid themselves at all costs.

These, comrades, are the conditions that were required on a world scale for this most difficult and at the same time most important socialist reform, this crucial and fundamental socialist measure, to come to the forefront, and it has come to the forefront in Russia. The formation of the Poor Peasants' Committees and this joint Congress of land departments, Poor Peasants' Committees and agricultural communes, taken in conjunction with the struggle which took place in the countryside this summer and autumn, go to show that very many peasants have been awakened, and that the peasants themselves, the majority of the working peasants, are striving toward collective farming. Of course, I repeat, we must tackle this great reform gradually. Here, nothing can be done at one stroke. But I must remind you that the fundamental law on the socialisation of the land, whose adoption was a foregone conclusion on the first day after the Revolution of October 25, at the very first session of the first organ of Soviet power, the Second All-Russia Congress of Soviets, did more than abolish private ownership of land for ever and do away with landed estates. It also stipulated, among other things, that farm property, draught animals and farm implements which passed into the possession of the nation and the working peasants should become public property and cease to be the private property of individual farms. And on the fundamental question of our present aims, of what tasks of land disposal we want carried out, and what we want from the supporters of the Soviet government, the working peasants, in this respect, Article 11 of the law on the socialisation of the land, which was adopted in February 1918, states that the aim is to develop collective farming,

the most advantageous form of farming from the point of view of economy of labour and products. This will be at the expense of individual farming and with the aim of passing over to socialist farming.

Comrades, when we passed this law, complete agreement did not exist between the Communists and the other parties. On the contrary, we passed this law when the Soviet Government united the Communists and the Left S.R. Party members, who did not hold communist views. Nevertheless, we arrived at a unanimous decision, to which we adhere to this day, remembering, I repeat, that the transition from individual farming to collective farming cannot be effected at one stroke, and that the struggle which developed in the towns was resolved more easily. In the towns thousands of workers had one capitalist to deal with, and it did not take much trouble to remove him. The struggle which developed in the rural districts, however, was much more complex. At first there was the general drive of the peasants against the landowners; at first the power of the landowners was utterly destroyed so that it could never be restored again. This was followed by a struggle among the peasants themselves, among whom new capitalists arose in the shape of the kulaks, the exploiters and profiteers who used their surplus grain to enrich themselves at the expense of the starving non-agricultural parts of Russia. Here a new struggle began, and you know that this summer it led to a number of revolts. We do not say of the kulak as we do of the capitalist landowner that he must be deprived of all his property. What we do say is that we must break the kulak's resistance to indispensable measures, such as the grain monopoly, which he is violating to enrich himself by selling his grain surplus at exorbitant prices, while the workers and peasants in the non-agricultural areas are suffering pangs of hunger. Our policy here has been to wage a struggle as merciless as that waged against the landowners and capitalists. But there also remained the

question of the attitude of the poor peasants to the middle peasants. Our policy has always been to form an alliance with the middle peasant. He is no enemy of Soviet institutions. He is no enemy of the proletariat or socialism. He will, of course, hesitate and only consent to socialism when he sees by definite and convincing example that it is necessary. The middle peasant, of course, cannot be convinced by theoretical arguments or by agitation. And we do not count on that. But he can be convinced by the example and the solid front of the poor peasants. He can be convinced by an alliance of the poor peasants with the proletariat. And here we are counting on a prolonged and gradual process of persuasion and on a number of transitional measures which will bring about agreement between the proletarian, socialist section of the population, agreement between the Communists who are conducting a resolute fight against capital in all its forms, and the middle peasants.

Appreciating this state of affairs and that our task in the rural areas is incomparably more difficult, we present the question in the way it was presented in the law on the socialisation of the land. You know that the law proclaimed abolition of private ownership of land and equal land tenure, and you know that the enforcement of this law was begun in that spirit, and that it has been put into effect in the majority of rural areas. The law, moreover, contains, with the unanimous consent both of Communists and of people who at that time did not yet share communist views, the thesis I have just read to you, which declares that our common task and our common aim is the transition to socialist farming, to collective land tenure and collective farming. As we proceed with our construction, both the peasants who have already settled on the land and the prisoners of war who are now returning from captivity in thousands and millions, ragged and exhausted, are coming to realise more and more clearly the vast scope of the work that must be done to restore

agriculture and free the peasant for ever from his old, neglected, downtrodden and ignorant state. It is becoming clearer to them that the only sure way of escape, one that will bring the mass of peasants nearer to a civilised life and put them on a par with other citizens, is collective farming, which the Soviet government is now systematically striving to put into effect by gradual measures. It is for this purpose, for collective farming, that the communes and state farms are being formed. The importance of this type of farming is indicated in the law on the socialisation of the land. In the clause stating who is entitled to the use of the land, you will find that among the persons and institutions so entitled first place is given to the state, second to public organisations, third to agricultural communes, and fourth to agricultural co-operative societies. I again draw your attention to the fact that these fundamental principles of the law on the socialisation of the land were laid down when the Communist Party was carrying out not only its own will, but when it made deliberate concessions to those who in one way or another expressed the ideas and will of the middle peasants. We made such concessions, and are still making them. We concluded and are concluding agreements of this kind because the transition to the collective form of landownership, to collective farming, to state farms, to communes, cannot be effected at one stroke. It requires the determined and persistent action of the Soviet government, which has assigned one thousand million rubles for the improvement of agriculture on condition that collective farming is adopted. This law shows that we want to influence the mass of middle peasants mainly by force of example, by inviting them to improve farming, and that we count only on the gradual effect of such measures to bring about this profound and crucial revolution in agricultural production in Russia.

The alliance of the Poor Peasants' Committees, agricultural communes and land departments at the present

Congress shows us, and gives us full assurance, that by this transition to collective farming we have got things going correctly, on a truly socialist scale. This steady and systematic work must ensure an increase in the productivity of labour. For this purpose we must adopt the best farming methods and enlist the farm specialists of Russia so that we may be able to put the best organised farms at our service, which hitherto served as a source of enrichment for individuals, as the source of capitalist revival, as the source of a new bondage and a new enslavement of wage-labourers, but which now, under the socialisation of land law and the complete abolition of private ownership of land, must serve as a source of agricultural knowledge and culture and of higher productivity for the millions of working people. This alliance between the urban workers and the working peasants, the formation of the Poor Peasants' Committees and their merger with the Soviets are a guarantee that agricultural Russia has taken a path which is being taken by one West-European state after another, later than us, but with greater certainty. It was much harder for them to start the revolution because their enemy was not a rotten autocracy, but a highly cultured and united capitalist class. But, as you know, this revolution has begun. You know that the revolution has not been confined to Russia, and that our chief hope, our chief support, is the proletariat of the more advanced countries of Western Europe, and that this chief support of the world revolution has begun to move. And we are firmly convinced, and the course of the German revolution has shown it in practice, that the transition to socialist farming there, the use of more advanced agricultural techniques and the union of the agricultural population will proceed more rapidly and easily than in our country.

In alliance with the urban workers and the socialist proletariat of the whole world, the working peasants of Russia can now be certain they will overcome all their

adversities, beat off all the attacks of the imperialists, and accomplish that without which the emancipation of the working people is impossible—collective farming, the gradual but steady transition from small individual farms to collective farming. (*Loud, prolonged applause.*)

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## Draft Programme of the R.C.P.(B.)

(Excerpt)

### AGRARIAN SECTION OF THE PROGRAMME

Soviet power, having completely abolished private property in land, has already started on the implementation of a whole series of measures aimed at the organisation of large-scale socialist agriculture. The most important of these measures are the organisation of state farms (i.e., large socialist farms), the encouragement of agricultural communes (i.e., voluntary associations of tillers of the land for large-scale farming in common), and societies and co-operatives for the collective cultivation of the land; cultivation by the state of all uncultivated lands, no matter whom they belong to; mobilisation by the state of all agricultural specialists for vigorous measures to raise farming efficiency, etc.

Regarding all these measures as the only way to raise the productivity of agricultural labour, which is absolutely imperative, the R.C.P. seeks to carry them out as fully as possible, to extend them to the more backward regions of the country, and to take further steps in this direction.

Inasmuch as the antithesis between town and country is one of the root causes of the economic and cultural backwardness of the countryside, one which in a period of so deep a crisis as the present confronts both town and country with the direct threat of ruin and collapse, the R.C.P. regards the eradication of this antithesis as one of the basic tasks of building communism and, alongside

the above measures, considers it necessary extensively and systematically to enlist industrial workers for the communist development of agriculture, to promote the activities of the nation-wide Working Committee of Assistance set up by the Soviet government with this aim in view, and so on.

In all its work in the countryside the R.C.P. will continue to rely on the proletarian and semi-proletarian sections of the rural population, first organising them into an independent force, setting up Poor Peasants' Committees, Party cells in the villages, a specific type of trade union for rural proletarians and semi-proletarians, etc., exerting every effort to bring them closer to the urban proletariat and wresting them from the influence of the rural bourgeoisie and petty-property interests.

As far as the kulaks, the rural bourgeois, are concerned, the policy of the R.C.P. is one of decisive struggle against their attempts at exploitation and the suppression of their resistance to Soviet, communist, policy.

With regard to the middle peasants, the policy of the R.C.P. is to draw them into the work of socialist construction gradually and systematically. The Party sets itself the task of separating them from the kulaks, of winning them to the side of the working class by carefully attending to their needs, by combating their backwardness with ideological weapons and not with measures of suppression, and by striving in all cases where their vital interests are concerned to come to practical agreements with them, making concessions to them in determining the methods of carrying out socialist reforms.

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## Report on Work in the Countryside

Delivered at the Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.)

March 23, 1919

(*Prolonged applause.*) Comrades, I must apologise for having been unable to attend all the meetings of the committee elected by the Congress to consider the question of work in the countryside. My report will therefore be supplemented by the speeches of comrades who have taken part in the work of the committee from the very beginning. The committee finally drew up theses which were turned over to a commission and which will be reported on to you. I should like to dwell on the general significance of the question as it confronts us following the work of the committee and as, in my opinion, it now confronts the whole Party.

Comrades, it is quite natural that as the proletarian revolution develops we have to put in the forefront first one then another of the most complex and important problems of social life. It is perfectly natural that in a revolution which affects, and is bound to affect, the deepest foundations of life and the broadest mass of the population, not a single party, not a single government, no matter how close it may be to the people, can possibly embrace all aspects of life *at once*. And if we now have to deal with the question of work in the countryside, and in connection with this question to give prominence to the position of the middle peasants, there is nothing strange or abnormal in this from the standpoint of the development of the proletarian revolution in general. It is natural that the proletarian revolution had to begin with the fundamental relation between two hostile classes,

the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The principal task was to transfer power to the working class, to secure its dictatorship, to overthrow the bourgeoisie and to deprive them of the economic sources of their power which would undoubtedly be a hindrance to all socialist construction in general. Since we are acquainted with Marxism, none of us have ever for a moment doubted the truth of the thesis that the very economic structure of capitalist society is such that the deciding factor in that society must be either the proletariat or the bourgeoisie. We now see many former Marxists—from the Menshevik camp, for example—who assert that in a period of decisive struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie *democracy in general* can prevail. This is what is said by the Mensheviks, who have come to a complete agreement with the Socialist-Revolutionaries. As though it were not the bourgeoisie themselves who create or abolish democracy as they find most convenient for themselves! And since that is so, there can be no question of democracy in general at a time of acute struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It is astonishing how rapidly these Marxists or pseudo-Marxists—our Mensheviks, for example—expose themselves, and how rapidly their true nature, the nature of petty-bourgeois democrats, comes to the surface.

All his life Marx fought most of all the illusions of petty-bourgeois democracy and bourgeois democracy. Marx scoffed most of all at empty talk of freedom and equality, when it serves as a screen for the freedom of the workers to starve to death, or the equality between the one who sells his labour-power and the bourgeois who allegedly freely purchases that labour in the open market as if from an equal, and so forth. Marx explains this in all his economic works. It may be said that the whole of Marx's *Capital* is devoted to explaining the truth that *the basic forces of capitalist society are, and must be, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat*—bourgeoisie, as the builder of this capitalist society, as its leader, as its motive

force, and the proletariat, as its grave-digger and as the only force capable of replacing it. You can hardly find a single chapter in any of Marx's works that is not devoted to this. You might say that all over the world the socialists of the Second International have vowed and sworn to the workers time and again that they understand this truth. But when matters reached the stage of the real and, moreover, decisive struggle for power between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie we find that our Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, as well as the leaders of the old socialist parties all over the world, forgot this truth and began to repeat in purely parrot fashion the philistine phrases about democracy in general.

Attempts are sometimes made to lend these words what is considered to be greater force by speaking of the "dictatorship of democracy". That is sheer nonsense. We know perfectly well from history that the dictatorship of the democratic bourgeoisie meant nothing but the suppression of the insurgent workers. That has been the case ever since 1848—at any rate, beginning no later, and isolated examples may be found even earlier. History shows that it is precisely in a bourgeois democracy that a most acute struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie develops extensively and freely. We have had occasion to convince ourselves of this truth in practice. And the measures taken by the Soviet Government since October 1917 have been distinguished by their firmness on all fundamental questions precisely because we have never departed from this truth and have never forgotten it. The issue of the struggle for supremacy waged against the bourgeoisie can be settled only by the dictatorship of one class—the proletariat. Only the dictatorship of the proletariat can defeat the bourgeoisie. Only the proletariat can overthrow the bourgeoisie. And only the proletariat can secure the following of the people in the struggle against the bourgeoisie.

However, it by no means follows from this—and it

would be a profound mistake to think it does—that in further building communism, when the bourgeoisie have been overthrown and political power is already in the hands of the proletariat, we can continue to carry on without the participation of the middle, intermediary elements.

It is natural that at the beginning of the revolution—the proletarian revolution—the whole attention of its active participants should be concentrated on the main and fundamental issue, the supremacy of the proletariat and the securing of that supremacy by a victory over the bourgeoisie—making it certain that the bourgeoisie cannot regain power. We are well aware that the bourgeoisie still enjoy the advantages derived from the wealth they possess in other countries or the monetary wealth they possess, sometimes even in our own country. We are well aware that there are social elements who are more experienced than proletarians and who aid the bourgeoisie. We are well aware that the bourgeoisie have not abandoned the idea of returning to power and have not ceased attempting to restore their supremacy.

But that is by no means all. The bourgeoisie, who put forward most insistently the principle "my country is wherever it is good for me", and who, as far as money is concerned, have always been international—the *bourgeoisie internationally are still stronger than we are*. Their supremacy is being rapidly undermined, they are being confronted with such facts as the Hungarian revolution—about which we were happy to inform you yesterday and are today receiving confirming reports—and they are beginning to understand that their supremacy is shaky. They no longer enjoy freedom of action. But now, if you take into account the material means on the world scale, we cannot help admitting that in the material respect the bourgeoisie are at present still stronger than we are.

That is why nine-tenths of our attention and our prac-

tical activities were devoted, and had to be devoted, to this fundamental question—the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the establishment of the power of the proletariat and the elimination of every possibility of the return of the bourgeoisie to power. That is perfectly natural, legitimate, and unavoidable, and in this field very much has been accomplished.

Now, however, we must decide the question of other sections of the population. We must—and this was our unanimous conclusion in the agrarian committee, and on this, we are convinced, all Party workers will agree, because we merely summed up the results of their observations—we must now decide *the question of the middle peasants* in its totality.

Of course, there are people who, instead of studying the course taken by our revolution, instead of giving thought to the tasks now confronting us, instead of all this, make every step of the Soviet government a butt for the derision and criticism of the type we hear from those gentlemen, the Mensheviks and the Right Socialist-Revolutionaries. These people have still not understood that they must make a choice between us and the bourgeois dictatorship. We have displayed great patience, even indulgence, towards these people. We shall allow them to enjoy our indulgence once more. But in the very near future we shall set a limit to our patience and indulgence, and if they do not make their choice, we shall tell them in all seriousness to go to Kolchak.<sup>76</sup> (*Applause.*) We do not expect particularly brilliant intellectual ability from such people. (*Laughter.*) But it might have been expected that after experiencing the bestialities of Kolchak they ought to understand that we are entitled to demand that they should choose between us and Kolchak. If during the first few months that followed the October Revolution there were many naïve people who were stupid enough to believe that the dictatorship of the proletariat was something transient and fortuitous, today even the Mensheviks

and the Socialist-Revolutionaries ought to understand that there is something logically necessary in the struggle that is being waged because of the onslaught of the whole international bourgeoisie.

Actually only two forces have been created—the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Whoever has not learned this from Marx, whoever has not learned this from the works of all the great socialists, has never been a socialist, has never understood anything about socialism, and has only called himself a socialist. We are allowing these people a brief period for reflection and demand that they make their decision. I have mentioned them because they are now saying or will say: “The Bolsheviks have raised the question of the middle peasants; they want to make advances to them.” I am very well aware that considerable space is given in the Menshevik press to arguments of this kind, and even far worse. We ignore such arguments, we never attach importance to the jabber of our adversaries. People who are still capable of running to and fro between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat may say what they please. We are following our own road.

Our road is determined above all by considerations of class forces. A struggle is developing in capitalist society between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. As long as that struggle has not ended we shall give our keenest attention to fighting it out to the end. It has not yet been brought to the end, although in that struggle much has already been accomplished. The hands of the international bourgeoisie are no longer free; the best proof of this is that the Hungarian proletarian revolution has taken place. It is therefore clear that our rural organisational work has already gone beyond the limits to which it was confined when everything was subordinated to the fundamental demand of the struggle for power.

This development passed through two main phases. In October 1917 we seized power *together with the peasants*

as a whole. This was a bourgeois revolution, inasmuch as the class struggle in the rural districts had not yet developed. As I have said, the real proletarian revolution in the rural districts began only in the summer of 1918. Had we not succeeded in stirring up this revolution our work would have been incomplete. The first stage was the seizure of power in the cities and the establishment of the Soviet form of government. The second stage was one which is fundamental for all socialists and without which socialists are not socialists, namely, to single out the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements in the rural districts and to ally them to the urban proletariat in order to wage the struggle against the bourgeoisie in the countryside. This stage is also in the main completed. The organisations we originally created for this purpose, the Poor Peasants' Committees, had become so consolidated that we found it possible to replace them by properly elected Soviets, i.e., to reorganise the village Soviets so as to make them the organs of class rule, the organs of proletarian power in the rural districts. Such measures as the law on socialist land settlement and the measures for the transition to socialist farming, which was passed not very long ago by the Central Executive Committee and with which everybody is, of course, familiar, sum up our experience from the point of view of our proletarian revolution.

The main thing, the prime and basic task of the proletarian revolution, we have already accomplished. And precisely because we have accomplished it, a more complicated problem has come to the fore—our attitude towards the middle peasants. And whoever thinks that the prominence being given this problem is in any way symptomatic of a weakening of the character of our government, of a weakening of the dictatorship of the proletariat, that it is symptomatic of a change, however partial, however minute, in our basic policy, completely fails to understand the aims of the proletariat and the aims of the

communist revolution. I am convinced that there are no such people in our Party. I only wanted to warn the comrades against people not belonging to the workers' party who will talk in this way, not because it follows from any system of ideas, but because they merely want to spoil things for us and to help the whiteguards—or, to put it more simply, to incite against us the middle peasant, who is always vacillating, who cannot help vacillating, and who will continue to vacillate for a fairly long time to come. In order to incite the middle peasant against us they will say, "See, they are making advances to you! That means they have taken your revolts into account, they are beginning to wobble," and so on and so forth. All our comrades must be armed against agitation of this kind. And I am certain that they will be armed—provided we succeed now in having this question treated from the standpoint of the class struggle.

It is perfectly obvious that this fundamental problem—*how precisely to define the attitude of the proletariat towards the middle peasants*—is a more complex but no less urgent problem. Comrades, from the theoretical point of view, which has been mastered by the vast majority of the workers, this question presents no difficulty to Marxists. I will remind you, for instance, that in his book on the agrarian question, written at a time when he was still correctly expounding the teachings of Marx and was regarded as an undisputed authority in this field, Kautsky states in connection with the transition from capitalism to socialism that the task of a socialist party is to neutralise the peasants, i.e., to see to it that in the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie the peasant should remain neutral and should not be able to give active assistance to the bourgeoisie against us.

Throughout the extremely long period of the rule of the bourgeoisie, the peasants sided with the bourgeoisie and supported their power. This will be understood if you consider the economic strength of the bourgeoisie

and the political instruments of their rule. We cannot count on the middle peasant coming over to our side immediately. But if we pursue a correct policy, after a time these vacillations will cease and the peasant will be able to come over to our side.

It was Engels—who together with Marx laid the foundations of scientific Marxism, that is, the teachings by which our Party has always guided itself, and particularly in time of revolution—it was Engels who established the division of the peasants into small peasants, middle peasants, and big peasants, and this division holds good for most European countries even today. Engels said, "Perhaps it will not everywhere be necessary to suppress even the big peasant by force." And that we might ever use force in respect of the middle peasant (the small peasant is our friend) is a thought that has never occurred to any sensible socialist. That is what Engels said in 1894, a year before his death, when the agrarian question came to the fore.<sup>77</sup> This point of view expresses a truth which is sometimes forgotten, but with which we are all in theory agreed. In relation to the landowners and the capitalists our aim is complete expropriation. *But we shall not tolerate any use of force in respect of the middle peasants.* Even in respect of the rich peasants we do not say as resolutely as we do of the bourgeoisie—absolute expropriation of the rich peasants and the kulaks. This distinction is made in our programme. We say that the resistance of the counter-revolutionary efforts of the rich peasants must be suppressed. That is not complete expropriation.

The basic difference in our attitude towards the bourgeoisie and the middle peasant—complete expropriation of the bourgeoisie and an alliance with the middle peasant who does not exploit others—this basic line is accepted by everybody in theory. But this line is not consistently followed in practice; the people in the localities have not yet learned to follow it. When, after having

overthrown the bourgeoisie and consolidated its own power, the proletariat started from various angles to create a new society, the question of the middle peasant came to the fore. Not a single socialist in the world denied that the building of communism would take different courses in countries where large-scale farming prevails and in countries where small-scale farming prevails. That is an elementary truth, an ABC. And from this truth it follows that as we approach the problems of communist construction our principal attention must to a certain extent be concentrated precisely on the middle peasant.

Much will depend on how we define our attitude towards the middle peasant. Theoretically, that question has been solved; but we know perfectly well from our own experience that there is a difference between solving a problem theoretically and putting the solution into practice. We are now directly confronted with that difference, which was so characteristic of the great French Revolution, when the French Convention launched into sweeping measures but did not possess the necessary support to put them into effect, and did not even know on what class to rely for the implementation of any particular measure.

Our position is an infinitely more fortunate one. Thanks to a whole century of development, we know on which class we are relying. But we also know that the practical experience of that class is extremely inadequate. The fundamental aim was clear to the working class and the workers' party—to overthrow the power of the bourgeoisie and to transfer power to the workers. But *how* was that to be done? Everyone remembers with what difficulty and at the cost of how many mistakes we passed from workers' control to workers' management of industry. And yet that was work within our own class, among the proletarians, with whom we had always had to deal. But now we are called upon to define our attitude towards a new class, a class the urban worker does not know. We

have to determine our attitude towards a class which has no definite and stable position. The proletariat in the mass is in favour of socialism, the bourgeoisie in the mass are opposed to socialism. It is easy to determine the relations between these two classes. But when we come up against people like the middle peasants we find that *they are a class that vacillates*. The middle peasant is partly a property-owner and partly a working man. He does not exploit other working people. For decades the middle peasant defended his position with the greatest difficulty, he suffered the exploitation of the landowners and the capitalists, he bore everything. Yet he is a property-owner. Our attitude towards this vacillating class therefore presents enormous difficulties. In the light of more than a year's experience, in the light of more than six months' proletarian work in the rural districts, and in the light of the class differentiation in the rural districts that has already taken place, we must most of all beware here lest we are too hasty, lest we are inadequately theoretical, lest we regard what is in process of being accomplished, but has not yet been realised, as having been accomplished. In the resolution which is being proposed to you by the commission elected by the committee, and which will be read to you by a subsequent speaker, you will find sufficient warning against this.

From the economic point of view, it is obvious that we must help the middle peasant. Theoretically, there is no doubt of this. But because of our habits, our level of culture, the inadequacy of the cultural and technical forces we are in a position to place at the disposal of the rural districts, and because of the helpless manner in which we often approach the rural districts, comrades frequently resort to coercion and thus spoil everything. Only yesterday a comrade gave me a pamphlet entitled *Instructions and Regulations on Party Work in Nizhni-Novgorod Gubernia*, issued by the Nizhni-Novgorod Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), and

in this pamphlet, for example, I find this on p. 41. "The whole burden of the emergency tax decree must be placed on the shoulders of the village kulaks and profiteers and *the middle element of the peasants generally*." Well, well! These people have indeed "understood". This is either a printer's error—and it is impermissible that such printer's errors should be made—or a piece of rushed, hasty work, which shows how dangerous all haste is in this matter. Or—and this is the worst surmise of all, one I would not like to make with regard to the Nizhni-Novgorod comrades—they have simply failed to understand. It may very well be that it is an oversight.

We have, in practice, cases like the one related by a comrade in the commission. He was surrounded by peasants, and every one of them asked: "Tell me, am I a middle peasant or not? I have two horses and one cow... I have two cows and one horse," etc. And this agitator, who tours the uyezds, is expected to possess an infallible thermometer with which to gauge every peasant and say whether he is a middle peasant or not. To do that you must know the whole history of the given peasant's farm, his relation to higher and lower groups—and we cannot know that accurately.

Considerable practical ability and knowledge of local conditions are required here, and we do not yet possess them. You need not be ashamed to confess it; it must be admitted frankly. We were never utopians and never imagined that we would build communist society with the immaculate hands of immaculate Communists, born and educated in an immaculately communist society. That is a fairy-tale. We have to build communism out of the debris of capitalism, and only the class which has been steeled in the struggle against capitalism can do that. The proletariat, as you are very well aware, is not free from the shortcomings and weaknesses of capitalist society. It is fighting for socialism, but at the same time it is fighting against its own shortcomings. The best and foremost

section of the proletariat, which carried on a desperate struggle in the cities for decades, was in a position to acquire in the course of that struggle the culture of life in the capital and other cities, and to a certain extent did acquire it. You know that even in advanced countries the rural districts were condemned to ignorance. Of course, we shall raise the level of culture in the rural districts, but that will be the work of many, many years, that is what our comrades everywhere are forgetting and what is being strikingly brought home to us by every word uttered by people who come from the rural districts; not by the intellectuals who work here, not by the officials—we have listened to them a lot—but by people who have in practice observed the work in the rural districts. It was these opinions that we found particularly valuable in the agrarian committee. These opinions will be particularly valuable now—I am convinced of that—for the whole Party Congress, for they come not from books, and not from decrees, but from experience.

All this obliges us to work for the purpose of introducing the greatest possible clarity into our attitude towards the middle peasant. This is very difficult, because *such clarity does not exist in reality*. Not only is this problem unsolved, it is *insoluble*, if you want to solve it *immediately and all at once*. There are people who say that there was no need to write so many decrees. They blame the Soviet Government for setting about writing decrees without knowing how they were to be put into effect. These people, as a matter of fact, do not realise that they are sinking to the whiteguard position. If we had expected that life in the rural districts could be completely changed by writing a hundred decrees, we would have been absolute idiots. But if we had refrained from indicating in decrees the road that must be followed, we would have been traitors to socialism. These decrees, while in practice they could not be carried into effect fully and immediately, played an important part as pro-

paganda. While formerly we carried on our propaganda by means of general truths, *we are now carrying on our propaganda by our work*. That is also preaching, but it is preaching by action—only not action in the sense of the isolated sallies of some upstarts, at which we scoffed so much in the era of the anarchists and the socialism of the old type. Our decree is a call, but not the old call “Workers, arise and overthrow the bourgeoisie!” No, it is a call to the people, it calls them to practical work. *Decrees are instructions which call for practical work on a mass scale*. That is what is important. Let us assume that decrees do contain much that is useless, much that in practice cannot be put into effect; but they contain material for practical action, and the purpose of a decree is to teach practical steps to the hundreds, thousands, and millions of people who heed the voice of the Soviet government. This is a trial in practical action in the sphere of socialist construction in the rural districts. If we treat matters in this way we shall acquire a good deal from the sum total of our laws, decrees, and ordinances. We shall not regard them as absolute injunctions which must be put into effect instantly and at all costs.

We must avoid everything that in practice may tend to encourage individual abuses. In places careerists and adventurers have attached themselves to us like leeches, people who call themselves Communists and are deceiving us, and who have wormed their way into our ranks because the Communists are now in power, and because the more honest government employees refused to come and work with us on account of their retrograde ideas, while careerists have no ideas, and no honesty. These people, whose only aim is to make a career, resort in the localities to coercion, and imagine they are doing a good thing. But in fact the result of this at times is that the peasants say, “Long live Soviet power, but *down with the communists!*” (i.e., communism). This is not an invention: these facts are taken from real life, from the reports



of comrades in the localities. We must not forget what enormous damage is always caused by lack of moderation, by all rashness, and haste.

We had to hurry and, by taking a desperate leap, to get out of the imperialist war at any cost, for it had brought us to the verge of collapse. We had to make most desperate efforts to crush the bourgeoisie and the forces that were threatening to crush us. All this was necessary, without this we could not have triumphed. But if we were to act in the same way towards the middle peasant it would be such idiocy, such stupidity, it would be so ruinous to our cause, that only provocateurs could deliberately act in such a way. The aim here must be an entirely different one. Here our aim is not to smash the resistance of obvious exploiters, to defeat and overthrow them—which was the aim we previously set ourselves. No, now that this main purpose has been accomplished, more complicated problems arise. You cannot create anything here by coercion. *Coercion applied to the middle peasants would cause untold harm.* This section is a numerous one, it consists of millions of individuals. Even in Europe, where it nowhere reaches such numbers, where technology and culture, urban life and railways are tremendously developed, and where it would be easiest of all to think of such a thing, nobody, not even the most revolutionary of socialists, has ever proposed adopting measures of coercion towards the middle peasant.

When we were taking power we relied on the support of the peasants as a whole. At that time the aim of all the peasants was the same—to fight the landowners. But their prejudice against large-scale farming has remained to this day. The peasant thinks that if there is a big farm, that means he will again be a farm-hand. That, of course, is a mistake. But the peasant's idea of large-scale farming is associated with a feeling of hatred and the memory of how landowners used to oppress the people. That feeling still remains, it has not yet died.

We must particularly stress the truth that here by the very nature of the case coercive methods can accomplish nothing. The economic task here is an entirely different one; there is no upper layer that can be cut off, leaving the foundation and the building intact. That upper layer which in the cities was represented by the capitalists does not exist in the villages. *Here coercion would ruin the whole cause.* Prolonged educational work is required. We have to give the peasant, who not only in our country but all over the world is a practical man and a realist, concrete examples to prove that the "communia" is the best possible thing. Of course, nothing will come of it if hasty individuals flit down to a village from a city to chatter and stir up a number of intellectual-like and at times unintellectual-like squabbles, and then quarrel with everyone and go their way. That sometimes happens. Instead of evoking respect, they evoke ridicule, and deservedly so.

On this question we must say that we do encourage communes, but they must be so organised *as to gain the confidence of the peasants.* And until then we are pupils of the peasants and not their teachers. Nothing is more stupid than people who know nothing about farming and its specific features, rushing to the village only because they have heard of the advantages of socialised farming, are tired of urban life and desire to work in rural districts—it is most stupid for such people to regard themselves as teachers of the peasants in every respect. *Nothing is more stupid than the very idea of applying coercion in economic relations with the middle peasant.*

The aim is not to expropriate the middle peasant but to bear in mind the specific conditions in which the peasant lives, to learn from him methods of transition to a better system, *and not to dare to give orders!* That is the rule we have set ourselves. (*General applause.*) That is the rule we have endeavoured to set forth in our draft resolution, for in that respect, comrades, we have indeed sinned a great deal. We are by no means ashamed to



confess it. We were inexperienced. Our very struggle against the exploiters was taken from experience. If we have sometimes been condemned on account of it, we can say, "Dear capitalist gentlemen, you have only yourselves to blame. If you had not offered such savage, senseless, insolent, and desperate resistance, if you had not joined in an alliance with the world bourgeoisie, the revolution would have assumed more peaceful forms." Now that we have repulsed the savage onslaught on all sides we can change to other methods, because we are acting not as a narrow circle, but as a party which is leading the millions. The millions cannot immediately understand a change of course, and so it frequently happens that blows aimed at the kulaks fall on the middle peasants. That is not surprising. It must only be understood that this is due to historical conditions which have now been outlived and that the new conditions and the new tasks in relation to this class demand a new psychology.

Our decrees on peasant farming are in the main correct. We have no grounds for renouncing a single one of them, or for regretting a single one of them. But if the decrees are right, *it is wrong to impose them on the peasants by force*. That is not contained in a single decree. They are right inasmuch as they indicate the roads to follow, inasmuch as they call to practical measures. When we say, "Encourage associations", we are giving instructions which must be tested many times before the final form in which to put them into effect is found. When it is stated that we must strive to gain the peasants' voluntary consent, it means that they must be persuaded, and persuaded by practical deeds. They will not allow themselves to be convinced by mere words, and they are perfectly right in that. It would be a bad thing if they allowed themselves to be convinced merely by reading decrees and agitational leaflets. If it were possible to reshape economic life in this way, such reshaping would not be worth a brass farthing. It must first be proved that such

association is better, people must be united in such a way that they become actually united and are not at odds with each other—it must be proved that association is advantageous. That is the way the peasant puts the question and that is the way our decrees put it. If we have not been able to achieve that so far, there is nothing to be ashamed of and we must admit it frankly.

We have so far accomplished only the fundamental task of every socialist revolution—that of defeating the bourgeoisie. That in the main has been accomplished, although an extremely difficult half-year is beginning in which the imperialists of the world are making a last attempt to crush us. We can now say without in the least exaggerating that *they themselves understand that after this half-year their cause will be absolutely hopeless*. Either they take advantage now of our state of exhaustion and defeat us, an isolated country, or we emerge victorious not merely in regard to our country alone. In this half-year, in which the food crisis had been aggravated by a transport crisis, and in which the imperialist powers are endeavouring to attack us on several fronts, our situation is extremely difficult. *But this is the last difficult half-year*. We must continue to mobilise all our forces in the struggle against the external enemy who is attacking us.

But when we speak of the aims of our work in the rural districts, in spite of all the difficulties, and in spite of the fact that our experience has been wholly concerned with the immediate task of crushing the exploiters, we must remember, and never forget that our aims in the rural districts, in relation to the middle peasant, are entirely different.

All the class-conscious workers—from Petrograd, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, or Moscow—who have been to the rural districts related examples of how a number of misunderstandings which appeared to be irremovable, and a number of conflicts which appeared to be very serious, were removed or mitigated when intelligent working men came forward and spoke, not in the bookish language, but in a

language understood by the peasants, when they spoke not as commanders who take the liberty of giving orders without knowing anything of rural life, but as comrades, explaining the situation and appealing to their sentiments as working people against the exploiters. And by such comradely explanation they accomplished what could not be accomplished by hundreds of others who conducted themselves like commanders and superiors.

That is the spirit that permeates the resolution we are now submitting to you.

I have endeavoured in my brief report to dwell on the underlying principles, on the general political significance of this resolution. I have endeavoured to show—and I should like to think that I have succeeded—that from the point of view of the interests of the revolution as a whole we are making no change of policy, we are not changing the line. The whiteguards and their henchmen are shouting, or will shout, that we are. Let them shout. We do not care. We are pursuing our aims in a most consistent manner. We must transfer our attention from the aim of suppressing the bourgeoisie to the aim of arranging the life of the middle peasant. We must live in peace with him. In a communist society the middle peasants will be on our side only when we alleviate and improve their economic conditions. If tomorrow we could supply one hundred thousand first-class tractors, provide them with fuel, provide them with drivers—you know very well that this at present is sheer fantasy—the middle peasant would say, “I am for the communists” (i.e., for communism). But in order to do that we must first defeat the international bourgeoisie, we must compel them to give us these tractors, or so develop our productive forces as to be able to provide them ourselves. That is the only correct way to pose this question.

The peasant needs the industry of the towns; he cannot live without it, and it is in our hands. If we set about the task properly, the peasant will be grateful to us for

bringing him these products, these implements and this culture from the towns. They will be brought to him not by exploiters, not by landowners, but by his fellow-workers, whom he values very highly, but values in a practical manner, for the actual help they give, at the same time rejecting—and quite rightly rejecting—all domineering and “orders” from above.

First help, and then endeavour to win confidence. If you set about this task correctly, if every step taken by every one of our groups in the uyezds, the volosts, the food procurement groups, and in every other organisation is made properly, if every step of ours is carefully checked from this point of view, we shall gain the confidence of the peasant, and only then shall we be able to proceed farther. What we must now do is to help him and advise him. This will not be the orders of a commander, but the advice of a comrade. The peasant will then be entirely on our side.

This, comrades, is what is contained in our resolution, and this, in my opinion, must become the decision of the Congress. If we adopt this, if it serves to determine the work of all our Party organisations, we shall cope with the second great task before us.

We have learned how to overthrow the bourgeoisie, how to suppress them, and we are proud of the fact. But we have not yet learned how to regulate our relations with the millions of middle peasants, how to win their confidence, and we must frankly admit it. But we have understood the task, we have set it, and we say in all confidence, with full knowledge and determination, that we shall cope with this task—and then socialism will be absolutely invincible. (*Prolonged applause.*)

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### **Resolution of the Eighth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) on the Attitude to the Middle Peasants**

Basing itself on the Party Programme adopted on March 22, 1919, insofar as it concerns work in the rural areas, and giving full support to the law already promulgated by the Soviet government on socialist land settlement and the measures for the transition to socialist farming, the Eighth Congress recognises that at the present time it is particularly important to adhere more strictly to the line of the Party in respect of the middle peasants, to display a more considerate attitude towards their needs, end arbitrary action on the part of the local authorities, and make an effort towards agreement with them.

1) To confuse the middle peasants with the kulaks and to extend to them in one or another degree measures directed against the kulaks is to violate most flagrantly not only all the decrees of the Soviet government and its entire policy, but also all the basic principles of communism, according to which agreement between the proletariat and the middle peasants is one of the conditions for a painless transition to the abolition of all exploitation in the period of decisive struggle waged by the proletariat to overthrow the bourgeoisie.

2) The middle peasants, who have comparatively strong economic roots owing to the lagging of agricultural techniques behind industrial techniques even in the leading capitalist countries, to say nothing of Russia, will

continue to exist for quite a long time after the beginning of the proletarian revolution. Therefore, the tactics of the functionaries of the Soviets in the villages, as well as of Party functionaries, must envisage a long period of co-operation with the middle peasants.

3) The Party must at all costs ensure that all Soviet functionaries in the countryside have a clear and thorough grasp of the axiom of scientific socialism that the middle peasants are not exploiters since they do not profit by the labour of others. Such a class of small producers cannot lose by socialism, but, on the contrary, will gain a great deal by casting off the yoke of capital which exploits it in a thousand different ways even in a most democratic republic.

The correctly applied policy of Soviet power in the countryside, therefore, ensures alliance and agreement between the victorious proletariat and the middle peasants.

4) While encouraging co-operatives of all kinds as well as agricultural communes of middle peasants, representatives of Soviet power must not allow the slightest coercion to be used in setting them up. Associations are only worth while when they have been set up by the peasants themselves, on their own initiative, and the benefits of them have been verified in practice. Undue haste in this matter is harmful, for it can only strengthen prejudices against innovations among the middle peasants.

Representatives of Soviet power who permit themselves to employ not only direct but even indirect compulsion to bring peasants into communes must be brought strictly to account and removed from work in the countryside.

5) All arbitrary requisitioning, i.e., requisitioning not in conformity with the exact provisions of laws issued by the central authority, must be ruthlessly punished. The Congress insists on the strengthening of control in this field by the People's Commissariat of Agriculture, Peo-

ple's Commissariat of the Interior, and the All-Russia Central Executive Committee.

6) At the present time the extreme chaos which has been caused in all countries of the world by the four years of imperialist war in the predatory interests of the capitalists, and which has become particularly acute in Russia, places the middle peasants in a difficult position.

In view of this, the law issued by the Soviet government on the emergency tax, as distinct from all the laws issued by all the bourgeois governments in the world, makes a point of laying the burden of the tax wholly on the kulaks, the inconsiderable number of peasant exploiters who particularly enriched themselves during the war. The middle peasants must be taxed very mildly, so that the sum levied is fully within their means and not burdensome to them.

The Party demands, in any case, lenience towards the middle peasants in collecting the emergency tax, even if this reduces the total revenue.

7) The socialist state must extend the widest possible aid to the peasants, mainly by supplying the middle peasants with products of urban industries and, especially, improved agricultural implements, seed and various materials in order to raise efficiency in agriculture and ensure improvement of the peasants' working and living conditions.

If the present economic chaos does not allow the immediate and full implementation of these measures, it remains the duty of local Soviet authorities to explore all possible avenues to render the poor and middle peasants any real aid to support them at the present difficult moment. The Party finds it necessary to establish a large state fund for this purpose.

8) In particular, efforts must be made to give real and full effect to the law issued by the Soviet government which requires of state farms, agricultural communes, and all other similar associations that they render imme-

diately and all-round assistance to the middle peasants in their neighbourhood. Only on the basis of such actual assistance is it possible to achieve agreement with the middle peasants. Only in this way can and must their confidence be won.

The Congress draws the attention of all Party workers to the need to put into effect immediately all the points set forth in the agrarian section of the Party Programme, namely:

(a) regulation of the use of land by the peasants (elimination of scattered holdings, the open field system, etc.), (b) supply of improved seeds and artificial fertilisers to the peasants, (c) improvement of the breeds of the peasants' livestock, (d) spreading of agronomical knowledge, (e) agronomical assistance to the peasants, (f) repair of the peasants' farm implements at repair shops belonging to the Soviets, (g) organisation of centres hiring out implements, experimental stations, model fields, etc., (h) improvements to the peasants' land.

9) Peasants' co-operative associations with the object of increasing agricultural production, and especially of processing farm produce, improvements to the peasants' land, support of handicraft industries, etc., must be accorded extensive aid, both financial and organisational, by the state.

10) The Congress reminds all concerned that neither the decisions of the Party nor the decrees of Soviet power have ever deviated from the line of agreement with the middle peasants. In the cardinal matter of the organisation of Soviet power in the countryside, for instance, a circular letter signed by the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and the People's Commissar for Food was issued when the Poor Peasants' Committees were established, pointing to the need to include in these Committees representatives of the middle peasants. When the Poor Peasants' Committees were abolished, the All-Russia Congress of Soviets again pointed to the need to

include representatives of the middle peasants in the volost Soviets. The policy of the workers' and peasants' government and the Communist Party must in the future too be permeated by this spirit of agreement between the proletariat and the poor peasants on the one hand, and the middle peasants on the other.

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### On the Candidacy of M. I. Kalinin for the Post of Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee

Speech at the Twelfth Session  
of the All-Russia  
Central Executive Committee  
March 30, 1919

Comrades! To find a person who could take the place of Comrade Yakov Mikhailovich Sverdlov in full is an exceedingly difficult task, for it is next to impossible for any one man to be at once a leading Party worker, moreover one who knows the history of the Party, and an excellent judge of people capable of choosing leading functionaries for the Soviets. It would be impossible to expect any one comrade to assume all the functions that Comrade Sverdlov took care of alone—on this all were agreed when candidacies were discussed in the Party—and hence we shall have to entrust the various functions to whole collegiums that will meet daily and direct the different spheres of work. As far as the chairman is concerned, we must ensure that he expresses the Party line in respect of the peasantry.

You know that our approach to the middle peasants as set forth at the Party Congress introduces no change in our general policy. The tasks we have outlined in regard to the middle peasants must be carried out once our primary problem—the suppression of the bourgeoisie—has been solved. The question of the attitude to the middle peasants is a more acute problem for us than for our comrades in Europe, and we must make sure that we

have at the head of the Soviet state a comrade who can demonstrate that our decision in this matter will really be carried out.

I believe that we can and must find a comrade who will devote himself wholly to carrying out the line of the leading Party in respect of the middle peasants. We know that at present the problem of gathering and transmitting information is particularly acute. We know that the break-down of transport facilities and the existence of civil war, which at times interrupts communications between the centre and entire regions, not to speak of separate gubernias—we know that under the circumstances this problem requires special attention.

We know that we can solve this problem if we find a comrade with the necessary experience and knowledge of the life of the middle peasants, and I believe that the candidacy of which you read in today's papers meets all these requirements. This is the candidacy of Comrade Kalinin.

Here we have a comrade who has been engaged in Party work for nearly twenty years. He is a peasant from Tver Gubernia, who has close connections with peasant farming which he constantly renews and freshens. Petrograd workers have witnessed his ability to approach wide sections of the working masses who had had no Party experience; where other propagandists and agitators failed to find the right, comradely approach to them, Comrade Kalinin succeeded. All this is especially important at the present time. Of course, the middle peasantry as a whole, all the best elements among them, are giving us the resolute support that will overcome all difficulties and put down the revolt of the rural kulaks and that insignificant minority of the rural masses who follow them. We know that our main task in a country of small peasants is to ensure an indestructible alliance of the workers and the middle peasants. Our agrarian measures—complete abolition of landed proprietorship and deter-

mined assistance to the middle peasants—have already produced results, and in the course of the past year have led to an increase in the number of middle peasants. But in the localities people have frequently been appointed to administrative posts who were not up to the job.

There have been cases of abuses, but we are not to blame for them. We know that we have done everything we could to enlist the intelligentsia, but there were political differences that kept us apart. We know that the epoch of bourgeois parliamentarism has ended, that the sympathy of the workers of the whole world is with Soviet power, and that the victory of Soviet power is inevitable, no matter how many proletarian leaders the bourgeoisie may kill, as they are doing in Germany. The sum total of their experience will, in the long run, inevitably bring the intelligentsia into our ranks, and we shall acquire the material with which we can govern. We shall see to it that alien elements who have attached themselves to Soviet power are removed—indeed, they are one cause of dissatisfaction which we are not afraid to admit is legitimate. We must pay maximum attention to the fight against this evil. At the Party Congress we decided firmly to make this line of conduct obligatory for all functionaries.

We must say that we see no way of introducing socialist farming other than through a series of comradely agreements with the middle peasants, to whom we must turn more and more often.

We know also that comrades who bore the brunt of the work in the period of the revolution and were completely engrossed in this work, were unable to approach the middle peasants as they should have, they could not avoid making mistakes, each of which was seized upon by our enemies, each of which gave rise to certain doubts and complicated the middle peasant's attitude toward us.

That is why it is very important for this purpose to find a comrade possessing the qualities I have mentioned. We must help him with our organisational experience, so that the middle peasants should see that they have one of their own as the highest functionary in the whole Soviet Republic, so that the decision of our Party calling for a proper approach to the middle peasant and declaring our resolve to examine, study every step we make and test it in the light of the experience we have gained will not remain on paper.

We know that the numbers of our allies are growing, that they will increase many times over in the next few months, but for the time being the burden rests wholly on our country, which is greatly ruined and impoverished. The load is more than the middle peasant can carry. We must go to him and do everything we can, we must make him understand and show him in practice that we are firmly resolved to carry out the decisions of our Party Congress.

That is why the candidacy of a man like Comrade Kalinin ought to have the unanimous support of us all. His candidacy will enable us to organise practically a series of direct contacts between the highest representative of Soviet power and the middle peasants; it will help to bring us closer to them.

This aim cannot be achieved at once, but we have no doubt that the decision we propose to make will be the correct one, though we know that we have little practical experience in this respect. Let the highest representative of the Soviet Republic himself be the first, with our joint assistance, to begin acquiring this experience, gather the full sum of knowledge, and check up; then we can be certain that we shall solve the task facing us, that Russia will become not only the model of a country where the dictatorship of the proletariat has been firmly established and the bourgeoisie ruthlessly suppressed—this has already been done—but also the model of a country where the

relations between the urban workers and the middle peasants are satisfactorily arranged on the basis of comradely support and new experience; this is one of the main guarantees of the complete victory of the proletarian revolution.

That is why I take it upon myself to recommend to you this candidacy—the candidacy of Comrade Kalinin.

Brief report published in  
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## The Middle Peasants

### A Speech on a Gramophone Record

The most important question now confronting the Communist Party, the question on which most attention was concentrated at the last Party Congress, is that of the middle peasants.

Naturally, the first question usually asked is, what is a middle peasant?

Naturally, Party comrades have often related how they have been asked this question in the villages. The middle peasant, we say in reply, is a peasant who does not exploit the labour of others, who does not live on the labour of others, who does not take the fruits of other people's labour in any shape or form, but works himself, and lives by his own labour.

Under capitalism there were fewer peasants of this type than there are now, because the majority of the peasants were in the ranks of the impoverished, and only an insignificant minority, then, as now, were in the ranks of the kulaks, the exploiters, the rich peasants.

The middle peasants have been increasing in number since the private ownership of land was abolished, and the Soviet government has firmly resolved at all costs to establish relations of complete peace and harmony with them. It goes without saying that the middle peasant cannot immediately accept socialism, because he clings firmly to what he is accustomed to, he is cautious about

all innovations, subjects what he is offered to a factual, practical test and does not decide to change his way of life until he is convinced that the change is necessary.

It is precisely for this reason that we must know, remember and put into practice the rule that when Communist workers go into rural districts they must try to establish comradely relations with the middle peasants, it is their duty to establish these comradely relations with them; they must remember that working peasants who do not exploit the labour of others are the comrades of the urban workers and that we can and must establish with them a voluntary alliance inspired by sincerity and confidence. Every measure proposed by the communist government must be regarded merely as advice, as a suggestion to the middle peasants, as an invitation to them to accept the new order.

Only by co-operation in the work of testing these measures in practice, finding out in what way they are mistaken, eliminating possible errors and achieving agreement with the middle peasant—only by such co-operation can the alliance between the workers and the peasants be ensured. This alliance is the main strength and the bulwark of Soviet power; this alliance is a pledge that socialist transformation will be successful, victory over capital will be achieved and exploitation in all its forms will be abolished.

Delivered at the end  
of March 1919

*Collected Works,*  
Vol. 29, pp. 246-47



### Foreword to the Published Speech "Deception of the People With Slogans of Freedom and Equality"

The question I dealt with in my speech at the Congress on adult education on May 19—the question of equality in general and the equality of the worker and the peasant in particular—is undoubtedly one of the most pressing and "painful" questions of our time, and one that touches upon the most deep-seated prejudices of the petty bourgeois, the small proprietor, the petty commodity owner, every philistine and nine-tenths of the intelligentsia (including the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary intelligentsia).

Deny the equality of the worker and the peasant! How terrible! Of course, this is something all the friends of the capitalists, all of their hangers-on, and the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries first of all, are trying to seize upon in order to "irritate" the peasant, to "stir him up", to incite him against the workers, against the Communists. Such attempts are inevitable, but since they are founded on lies, they are doomed to disgraceful failure.

Peasants are sober-minded, business-like, practical people. Things must be explained to them in a practical light, through simple, everyday examples. Is the peasant who has a surplus of grain justified in hiding this surplus until prices reach exorbitant, profiteering levels, without any regard for the workers who are going hungry? Or is the state authority, which is in the hands of the workers,

justified in taking over all surplus grain not at profiteering, huckstering, exorbitant prices, but at a fixed price set by the state?

That is the point at issue. That is the whole thing in a nutshell. To avoid facing up to this fact the various swindlers who, like the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, are working for the capitalists, for the return of undivided power to them, are resorting to empty phrase-mongering about "equality" and the "unity of labour democracy".

The peasant must make his choice:

either freedom to trade in grain, which means speculation in grain, freedom for the rich to grow richer, freedom for the poor to be pauperised and to starve, return of undivided power to the landowners and capitalists, dissolution of the alliance of the peasants and the workers,

or delivery of grain surpluses at a fixed price to the state, i.e., the united workers' authority, which means an alliance between the peasants and the workers to get rid of the bourgeoisie altogether and to eliminate any possibility of their rule being restored.

Such is the choice.

The richer peasants, the kulaks, will choose the first alternative; they will want to try their luck in alliance with the capitalists and landowners against the workers, against the poor, but such peasants are a minority in Russia. The majority of the peasants will prefer an alliance with the workers against the restoration of capitalist rule, against "freedom for the rich to grow richer", against "freedom for the poor to starve", against the deceitful camouflage of this accursed capitalist "freedom" (freedom to starve to death) with flowery words about "equality" (the equality of the well-fed, who have a surplus of grain, and the starving).

Our task is to fight the cunning capitalist deception which the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries

practise by means of resounding and flowery phrasemongering about "freedom" and "equality".

Peasants! Unmask the wolves in sheep's clothing who praise "freedom", "equality", and "unity of labour democracy" and thereby actually champion the "freedom" of the landowner to oppress the peasants, the "equality" of the wealthy capitalist and the worker or the semi-starved peasant, the "equality" of the well-fed man who hides his surplus grain and the worker who is tormented by hunger and unemployment because the country has been ruined by war. Such wolves in sheep's clothing are the working people's worst enemies; whether they call themselves Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries, or non-party they are in reality friends of the capitalists.

"The workers and peasants are equal as working people, but the well-fed grain profiteer is not the equal of the hungry worker." "We are fighting only to protect the interests of labour, we take grain from profiteers, and not from working people." "We want to reach an understanding with the middle peasants, the working peasants"—this is what I said in my speech, this is the *crux* of the matter, this is the real truth which is confused by loud-sounding phrases about "equality". Moreover, the vast majority of the peasants know that this is the truth, that the *workers' state* fights the profiteers and the rich while rendering every assistance to the working people and the poor, whereas *both the landowner state* (under a monarchy) and the *capitalist state* (under the freest and most democratic republic) have always and everywhere, in all countries, *helped the rich to rob the working people, helped the speculators and the rich to grow richer at the expense of the poor who become poorer.*

This is a truth every peasant knows. And hence the greater their awareness, the sooner and more resolutely the majority of the peasants will make their choice and declare for alliance with the workers, for agreement with the workers' government, against the landowner or

capitalist state; for Soviet power against the "Constituent Assembly" or the "democratic republic"; for agreement with the Bolshevik Communists, against any support for the capitalists, Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries!

\* \* \*

To the "learned" gentlemen, to the democrats, socialists, Social-Democrats, Socialist-Revolutionaries, etc., we say: you all pay lip-service to the "class struggle", but actually you close your eyes to it at the very time when it is growing especially acute. And to do that means to side with capital, with the bourgeoisie, against the working people.

He who recognises the class struggle must also recognise that in a bourgeois republic, even in the freest and most democratic bourgeois republic, "freedom" and "equality" never were, and never could be, anything but an expression of the equality and freedom of the *commodity owners*, the equality and freedom of *capital*. Marx, in all of his writings and especially in his *Capital* (which you all recognise *in words*), made this clear thousands of times; he ridiculed the abstract conception of "freedom and equality" and the vulgarisers, the Benthamites<sup>78</sup> who closed their eyes to the facts, and he revealed the material roots of these abstractions.

Under the bourgeois system (i.e., as long as private property in land and the means of production persists) and under bourgeois democracy, "freedom and equality" remain purely formal, signifying in practice *wage-slavery* for the workers (who are formally free and equal) and the *undivided rule of capital*, the oppression of labour by capital. This is the ABC of socialism, my learned gentlemen—and you have forgotten it.

It follows from this ABC that during the proletarian revolution, when the class struggle has sharpened to the point of civil war, only fools and traitors will seek to get away

with empty talk about "freedom", "equality" and "unity of labour democracy". Actually everything depends on the outcome of the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and the intermediate, middle classes (including the entire petty bourgeoisie, and hence the entire peasantry) inevitably vacillate between the two camps.

The issue is this—which of the main forces, the proletariat or the bourgeoisie, these intermediate sections will join. There *cannot be* any third way; he who has not understood this from reading Marx's *Capital* has understood nothing in Marx, understood nothing in socialism, but is in fact a philistine and a petty bourgeois who blindly follows in the wake of the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, he who has understood all this, will not allow himself to be deceived by empty phrases about "freedom" and "equality", but will think and speak of *practical things*, that is, of the concrete conditions for a *rapprochement* between the peasants and the workers, their *alliance* against the capitalists, *agreement* between them against the exploiters, the rich and the profiteers.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is not the end of class struggle but its continuation in new forms. The dictatorship of the proletariat is class struggle waged by a proletariat that is victorious and has taken political power into its hands against a bourgeoisie that has been defeated but not destroyed, a bourgeoisie that has not vanished, not ceased to offer resistance, but that has intensified its resistance. The dictatorship of the proletariat is a specific form of class alliance between the proletariat, the vanguard of the working people, and the numerous non-proletarian strata of the working people (petty bourgeoisie, small proprietors, the peasantry, the intelligentsia, etc.), or the majority of these strata, an alliance against capital, an alliance whose aim is the complete overthrow of capital, complete suppression of the resistance offered by the bourgeoisie as well as of

attempts at restoration on its part, an alliance for the final establishment and consolidation of socialism. It is a specific kind of alliance which takes shape in a specific situation, namely, amidst fierce civil war; it is an alliance between firm supporters of socialism and its vacillating allies, sometimes "neutrals" (in which case instead of an agreement on struggle the alliance becomes an agreement on neutrality); an alliance between economically, politically, socially, and spiritually different classes. Only the corrupt heroes of the corrupt Berne or yellow International,<sup>79</sup> people like Kautsky, Martov and Co., can evade examination of the concrete forms, conditions, and tasks of this alliance by resorting to platitudes about "freedom", "equality", and "unity of labour democracy", that is, by snatching fragments from the ideological baggage of the era of commodity economy.

N. Lenin

June 23, 1919

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### Letter to the Workers and Peasants Apropos of the Victory Over Kolchak

Comrades, Red troops have liberated the entire Urals area from Kolchak and have begun the liberation of Siberia. The workers and peasants of the Urals and Siberia are enthusiastically welcoming Soviet power, for it is sweeping away with an iron broom all the landowner and capitalist scum who ground down the people with exactions, humiliations, floggings, and the restoration of tsarist oppression.

Although we all rejoice at the liberation of the Urals and the entry of the Red troops into Siberia we must not allow ourselves to be lulled into a sense of security. The enemy is still far from being destroyed. He has not even been definitely broken.

Every effort must be made to drive Kolchak and the Japanese and other foreign bandits out of Siberia, and an even greater effort is needed to destroy the enemy, to prevent him from starting his banditry again and again.

How is that to be achieved?

The harrowing experience of the Urals and Siberia, as well as the experience of all countries which have been through the torments of the four years of imperialist war, must not be without its lessons for us.

*Here are the five chief lessons* which all workers and peasants, all working people must draw from this experience so as to ensure themselves against a repetition of the calamities of the Kolchak rule.

*First lesson.* In order to defend the power of the workers and peasants from the bandits, that is, from the landowners and capitalists, we need a powerful Red Army. We have proved—not by words but by actual deeds—that we are capable of creating it, that we have learned to direct it and to defeat the capitalists notwithstanding the lavish assistance in arms and equipment they are receiving from the richest countries in the world. That much the Bolsheviks have proved by actual deeds. All workers and peasants—if they are class-conscious—must place their faith in them, not on the strength of their word (for to believe a man on the strength of his word is foolish), but on the strength of the experience of millions upon millions of people in the Urals and Siberia. It is a most difficult problem to combine two elements—arming the workers and peasants and giving the command to ex-officers, who for the most part sympathise with the landowners and capitalists. It can be solved only given splendid organising ability, strict and conscious discipline, and the confidence of the broad masses in the guiding force, the worker commissars. This most difficult problem the Bolsheviks have solved; cases of treachery on the part of ex-officers are very numerous, nevertheless the Red Army is not only in our hands, but has learned to defeat the generals of the tsar and the generals of Britain, France, and America.

Consequently, everyone who seriously wishes to rid himself of the rule of Kolchak must devote all his energies, means and ability without reservation to the task of building up and strengthening the Red Army. Obey all the laws on the Red Army and all orders conscientiously and scrupulously, support discipline in it in every way, and help the Red Army, each to the best of his ability—such is the prime, fundamental, and principal duty of every class-conscious worker and peasant who does not want the rule of Kolchak.

Fear like the plague the unruly guerrilla spirit, the arbitrary actions of isolated detachments and disobedience to the central authorities, for it spells doom as the Urals, Siberia, and the Ukraine have demonstrated.

He who does not unreservedly and selflessly assist the Red Army, or support order and discipline in it with all his might, is a traitor and treason-monger, a supporter of the rule of Kolchak, and should be shown no mercy.

With a strong Red Army we shall be invincible. Without a strong army we shall inevitably fall victim to Kolchak, Denikin, and Yudenich.<sup>80</sup>

*Second lesson.* The Red Army cannot be strong without large state stocks of grain, for without them it is impossible to move an army freely or to train it properly. Without them we cannot maintain the workers who are producing for the army.

Every class-conscious worker and peasant must know and remember that the chief reason now that our Red Army successes are not swift and stable enough is precisely the shortage of state stocks of grain. He who does not give his surpluses of grain to the state is helping Kolchak, he is a traitor and betrayer of the workers and peasants and is responsible for the unnecessary death and suffering of tens of thousands of workers and peasants in the Red Army.

Rogues and profiteers and very ignorant peasants argue in this way—better sell my grain at the open market price, I will get far more for it than the fixed price paid by the state.

But the whole point is that free sale promotes profiteering; a few get rich, only the wealthy are sated, while the working masses go hungry. We saw that in practice in the richest grain-bearing districts of Siberia and the Ukraine.

With the free sale of grain capital triumphs, while labour starves and suffers.

With the free sale of grain the price rises to thousands of rubles per pood, money loses its value, a handful of profiteers benefit while the people grow poorer.

With the free sale of grain the government granaries are empty, the army is powerless, industry dies, and the victory of Kolchak and Denikin is inevitable.

Only the rich, only the worst enemies of the workers' and peasants' government are consciously in favour of the free sale of grain. Those who out of ignorance are in favour of the free sale of grain should learn to understand from the example of Siberia and the Ukraine why it means victory for Kolchak and Denikin.

There are still unenlightened peasants who argue as follows: let the state first give me in exchange for my grain good wares at pre-war prices, then I will give up my surplus grain, otherwise I will not. And by this sort of argument the rogues and supporters of the landowners often hoodwink the unenlightened peasants.

It should not be difficult to understand that the workers' state which the capitalists completely devastated by four years of a predatory war for the sake of Constantinople, and which the Kolchaks and Denikins are now devastating again by way of revenge with the help of the capitalists of the whole world—it should not be difficult to understand that such a state cannot at this moment supply the peasants with goods, for industry is at a standstill. There is no food, no fuel, no industry.

Every sensible peasant will agree that the surplus grain must be given to the starving worker as a loan on condition of receiving industrial goods in return.

That is the way it is now. All class-conscious and sensible peasants, all except the rogues and profiteers will agree that *all surplus grain without exception* must be turned over to the workers' state as a loan, because then the state will restore industry and supply industrial goods to the peasants.

But, we may be asked, will the peasants trust the workers' state sufficiently to loan their surplus grain to it?

Our reply is that first, the state gives a bond for the loan in the shape of treasury notes. Secondly, all peasants know by experience that the workers' state, that is, Soviet power, helps the working people and fights the landowners and capitalists. That is why Soviet power is called workers' and peasants' power. Thirdly, the peasants have no other alternative—either they trust the worker or they trust the capitalist; they give their confidence and a loan either to the workers' state or to the capitalist state. There is no other alternative either in Russia or in any country in the world. The more class-conscious the peasants become, the more firmly they stand by the workers and the more resolute they are in their decision to help the workers' state in every way so as to make the return of the power of the landowners and capitalists impossible.

*Third lesson.* If Kolchak and Denikin are to be completely destroyed the strictest revolutionary order must be maintained, the laws and instructions of the Soviet government must be faithfully observed, and care must be taken that they are obeyed by all.

Kolchak's victories in Siberia and the Urals have been a clear example to all of us that the least disorder, the slightest infringement of Soviet laws, the slightest laxity or negligence at once serve to strengthen the landowners and capitalists and make for their victory. For the landowners and capitalists have not been destroyed and do not consider themselves vanquished; every intelligent worker and peasant sees, knows, and realises that they have only been beaten and have gone into hiding, are lying low, very often disguising themselves by a "Soviet" "protective" colouring. Many landowners have wormed their way into state farms, and capitalists into various "chief administrations" and "central boards", acting the part of Soviet officials; they are watching every step of

the Soviet government, waiting for it to make a mistake or show weakness, so as to overthrow it, to help the Czechoslovaks today and Denikin tomorrow.

Everything must be done to track down these handits, these landowners and capitalists who are lying low, and to ferret them out, *no matter what guise they take*, to expose them and punish them ruthlessly, for they are the worst foes of the working people, skilful, shrewd, and experienced enemies who are patiently waiting for an opportune moment to set a conspiracy going; they are saboteurs, who stop at no crime to injure Soviet power. We must be merciless towards these enemies of the working people, towards the landowners, capitalists, saboteurs, and counter-revolutionaries.

And in order to be able to catch them we must be skilful, careful, and class-conscious, we must watch out most attentively for the least disorder, for the slightest deviation from the conscientious observance of the laws of the Soviet government. The landowners and capitalists are strong not only because of their knowledge and experience and the assistance they get from the richest countries in the world, but also because of the force of habit and the ignorance of the broad masses who want to live in the "good old way" and do not realise how essential it is that Soviet laws be strictly and conscientiously observed.

The slightest lawlessness, the slightest infraction of Soviet law and order is a *loophole* the foes of the working people take immediate advantage of, it is a *starting-point* for Kolchak and Denikin victories. It would be criminal to forget that the Kolchak movement began through some slight lack of caution in respect of the Czechoslovaks, with insignificant insubordination on the part of certain regiments.

*Fourth lesson.* It is criminal to forget not only that the Kolchak movement began with trifles but also that the Mensheviks ("Social-Democrats") and S.R.s. ("So-

cialist-Revolutionaries") assisted its birth and directly supported it. It is time we learned to judge political parties not by their words, but by their deeds.

The Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries call themselves socialists, but they are actually *abettors of the counter-revolutionaries*, abettors of the landowners and capitalists. This was proved in practice not only by isolated facts, but by two big periods in the history of the Russian revolution: (1) the Kerensky period, and (2) the Kolchak period. Both times the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, while professing to be "socialists" and "democrats", actually played the role of *abettors of the whiteguards*. Are we then going to be so foolish as to believe them now they are suggesting we let them "try again", and call our permission a "united socialist (or democratic) front"? Since the Kolchak experience, can there still be peasants other than few isolated individuals, who do not realise that a "united front" with the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries means union with the abettors of Kolchak?

It may be objected that the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries have realised their mistake and renounced all alliance with the bourgeoisie. But that is not true. In the first place, the Right Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries have not renounced such an alliance, and there is no definite line of demarcation from these "Rights". There is no such line through the fault of the "Left" Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries; for although they verbally "condemn" their "Rights", even the best of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, in spite of all they say, are actually *powerless* compared with them. Secondly, what even the best of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries advocate are actually *Kolchak* ideas which assist the bourgeoisie and Kolchak and Denikin and help to mask their filthy and bloody capitalist deeds. These ideas are: a people's government, universal, equal, and direct suffrage, a constituent assem-

bly, freedom of the press, and the like. All over the world we see capitalist republics which justify capitalist rule and wars for the enslavement of colonies precisely by this lie of "democracy". In our own country we see that Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich or any other general readily hands out such "democratic" promises. Can we trust a man who on the strength of verbal promises helps a known bandit? The Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, all without exception, help known bandits, the world imperialists, using pseudo-democratic slogans to paint *their* state power, *their* campaign against Russia, *their* rule and *their* policy in bright colours. All the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries offer us an "alliance" on condition that we make concessions to the capitalists and their leaders, Kolchak and Denikin; as, for example, that we "renounce terror" (when we are faced with the terror of the multimillionaires of the whole Entente, of the whole alliance of the richest countries, that are engineering plots in Russia), or that we open the way for freedom to trade in grain, and so on. What these "conditions" of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries boil down to is this: we, the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries, are wavering towards the capitalists, and we want a "united front" with the Bolsheviks, against whom the capitalists taking advantage of every concessions are fighting! No, my Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary gentlemen, look no more in Russia for people capable of believing you. In Russia class-conscious workers and peasants now realise that the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries are abettors of the whiteguards—some deliberate and malicious, others unwitting and because of their persistence in their old mistakes, but abettors of the whiteguards nevertheless.

*Fifth lesson.* If Kolchak and his rule are to be destroyed and not allowed to recur, all peasants must unhesitatingly make their choice in favour of the workers' state. Some people (especially the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Re-

volutionaries—all of them, even the “Lefts” among them) are trying to scare the peasants with the bogey of the “dictatorship of one party”, the Party of Bolsheviks, Communists.

The peasants have learned from the Kolchak regime not to be afraid of this bogey.

Either the dictatorship (i.e., the iron rule) of the landowners and capitalists, or the dictatorship of the working class.

There is no middle course. The scions of the aristocracy, intellectualists and petty gentry, badly educated on bad books, dream of a middle course. There is no middle course anywhere in the world, nor can there be. Either the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie (masked by ornate Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik phrasology about a people’s government, constituent assembly, liberties, and the like), or the dictatorship of the proletariat. He who has not learned this from the whole history of the nineteenth century is a hopeless idiot. And we in Russia have all seen how the Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries dreamed of a middle course under Kerensky and under Kolchak.

To whom did these dreams do service? Whom did they assist? Kolchak and Denikin. Those who dream of a middle course are abettors of Kolchak.

In the Urals and Siberia the workers and peasants had an opportunity of comparing the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the working class. The dictatorship of the working class is being implemented by the Bolshevik Party, the party which as far back as 1905 and even earlier merged with the entire revolutionary proletariat.

Dictatorship of the working class means that the workers’ state will unhesitatingly suppress the landowners and capitalists and the renegades and traitors who help these exploiters, and will defeat them.

The workers’ state is an implacable enemy of the land-

owner and capitalist, of the profiteer and swindler, an enemy of the private ownership of land and capital, an enemy of the power of money.

The workers’ state is the only loyal friend and helper the working people and the peasantry have. No leaning towards capital but an alliance of the working people to fight it, *workers’ and peasants’ power, Soviet power*—that is what the “dictatorship of the working class” means *in practice*.

The Mensheviks and the Socialist-Revolutionaries want to scare the peasants with these words. They won’t succeed. After Kolchak, the workers and peasants even in the most remote backwoods realise that these words mean *precisely that without which there can be no salvation from Kolchak*.

Down with the waverers, with the spineless people who are erring in the direction of helping capital and have been captivated by the slogans and promises of capital! An implacable fight against capital, and an alliance of the working people, an alliance of the peasants and the working class—that is the last and most important lesson of the Kolchak regime.

*N. Lenin*

August 24, 1919

*Pravda* No. 190,  
August 28, 1919

*Collected Works,*  
Vol. 29, pp. 552-60



## Economics and Politics in the Era of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

I had intended to write a short pamphlet on the subject indicated in the title on the occasion of the second anniversary of Soviet power. But owing to the rush of everyday work I have so far been unable to get beyond preliminary preparations for some of the sections. I have therefore decided to essay a brief, summarised exposition of what, in my opinion, are the most essential ideas on the subject. A summarised exposition, of course, possesses many disadvantages and shortcomings. Nevertheless, a short magazine article may perhaps achieve the modest aim in view, which is to present the problem and the groundwork for its discussion by the Communists of various countries.

### I

Theoretically, there can be no doubt that between capitalism and communism there lies a definite transition period which must combine the features and properties of both these forms of social economy. This transition period has to be a period of struggle between dying capitalism and nascent communism—or, in other words, between capitalism which has been defeated but not destroyed and communism which has been born but is still very feeble.

The necessity for a whole historical era distinguished by these transitional features should be obvious not only to Marxists, but to any educated person who is in any

degree acquainted with the theory of development. Yet all the talk on the subject of the transition to socialism which we hear from present-day petty-bourgeois democrats (and such, in spite of their spurious socialist label, are all the leaders of the Second International, including such individuals as MacDonald, Jean Longuet, Kautsky and Friedrich Adler) is marked by complete disregard of this obvious truth. Petty-bourgeois democrats are distinguished by an aversion to class struggle, by their dreams of avoiding it, by their efforts to smooth over, to reconcile, to remove sharp corners. Such democrats, therefore, either avoid recognising any necessity for a whole historical period of transition from capitalism to communism or regard it as their duty to concoct schemes for reconciling the two contending forces instead of leading the struggle of one of these forces.

### 2

In Russia, the dictatorship of the proletariat must inevitably differ in certain particulars from what it would be in the advanced countries, owing to the very great backwardness and petty-bourgeois character of our country. But the basic forces—and the basic forms of social economy—are the same in Russia as in any capitalist country, so that the peculiarities can apply only to what is of lesser importance.

The basic forms of social economy are capitalism, petty commodity production, and communism. The basic forces are the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie (the peasantry in particular) and the proletariat.

The economic system of Russia in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat represents the struggle of labour, united on communist principles on the scale of a vast state and making its first steps—the struggle against petty commodity production and against the capitalism which still persists and against that which is newly

arising on the basis of petty commodity production.

In Russia, labour is united communistically insofar as, first, private ownership of the means of production has been abolished, and, secondly, the proletarian state power is organising large-scale production on state-owned land and in state-owned enterprises on a national scale, is distributing labour-power among the various branches of production and the various enterprises, and is distributing among the working people large quantities of articles of consumption belonging to the state.

We speak of "the first steps" of communism in Russia (it is also put that way in our Party Programme adopted in March 1919), because all these things have been only partially effected in our country, or, to put it differently, their achievement is only in its early stages. We accomplished instantly, at one revolutionary blow, all that can, in general, be accomplished instantly; on the first day of the dictatorship of the proletariat, for instance, on October 26 (November 8), 1917, the private ownership of land was abolished without compensation for the big landowners—the big landowners were expropriated. Within the space of a few months practically all the big capitalists, owners of factories, joint-stock companies, banks, railways, and so forth, were also expropriated without compensation. The state organisation of large-scale production in industry and the transition from "workers' control" to "workers' management" of factories and railways—this has, by and large, already been accomplished; but in relation to agriculture it has only just begun ("state farms", i.e., large farms organised by the workers' state on state-owned land). Similarly, we have only just begun the organisation of various forms of co-operative societies of small farmers as a transition from petty commodity agriculture to communist agriculture.\*

\* The number of "state farms" and "agricultural communes" in Soviet Russia is, as far as is known, 3,536 and 1,961 respectively,

The same must be said of the state-organised distribution of products in place of private trade, i.e., the state procurement and delivery of grain to the cities and of industrial products to the countryside. Available statistical data on this subject will be given below.

Peasant farming continues to be petty commodity production. Here we have an extremely broad and very sound, deep-rooted basis for capitalism, a basis on which capitalism persists or arises anew in a bitter struggle against communism. The forms of this struggle are private speculation and profiteering versus state procurement of grain (and other products) and state distribution of products in general.

### 3

To illustrate these abstract theoretical propositions, let us quote actual figures.

According to the figures of the People's Commissariat of Food, state procurements of grain in Russia between August 1, 1917, and August 1, 1918, amounted to about 30,000,000 poods, and in the following year to about 110,000,000 poods. During the first three months of the next campaign (1919-20) procurements will presumably total about 45,000,000 poods, as against 37,000,000 poods for the same period (August-October) in 1918.

These figures speak clearly of a slow but steady improvement in the state of affairs from the point of view of the victory of communism over capitalism. This improvement is being achieved in spite of difficulties without world parallel, difficulties due to the Civil War organised by Russian and foreign capitalists who are harnessing all the forces of the world's strongest powers.

and the number of agricultural artels is 3,696. Our Central Statistical Board is at present taking an exact census of all state farms and communes. The results will begin coming in in November 1919.

Therefore, in spite of the lies and slanders of the bourgeoisie of all countries and of their open or masked henchmen (the "socialists" of the Second International), one thing remains beyond dispute—as far as the basic economic problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat is concerned, the victory of communism over capitalism in our country is assured. Throughout the world the bourgeoisie is ranging and fuming against Bolshevism and is organising military expeditions, plots, etc., against the Bolsheviks, because it realises full well that our success in reconstructing the social economy is inevitable, provided we are not crushed by military force. And its attempts to crush us in this way are not succeeding.

The extent to which we have already vanquished capitalism in the short time we have had at our disposal, and despite the incredible difficulties under which we have had to work, will be seen from the following summarised figures. The Central Statistical Board has just prepared for the press data on the production and consumption of grain—not for the whole of Soviet Russia, but only for twenty-six gubernias.

The results are as follows:

26 gubernias of Soviet Russia	Population in millions	Production of grain (excluding seed and fodder), million poods	Grain delivered, million poods		Total amount of grain at disposal of population, million poods	Grain consumption, poods per capita
			Commissariat of Food	Profiteers		
Producing gubernias	Urban 4.4	—	20.9	20.6	41.5	9.5
	Rural 28.6	625.4	—	—	481.8	16.9
Consuming gubernias	Urban 5.9	—	20.0	20.0	40.0	6.8
	Rural 13.8	114.0	12.1	27.8	151.4	11.0
Total (26 gubernias)	52.7	739.4	53.0	68.4	714.7	13.6

Thus, approximately half the amount of grain supplied to the cities is provided by the Commissariat of Food and the other half by profiteers. This same proportion is revealed by a careful survey, made in 1918, of the food consumed by city workers. It should be borne in mind that for bread supplied by the state the worker pays *one-ninth* of what he pays the profiteer. The profiteering price for bread is *ten times* greater than the state price; this is revealed by a detailed study of workers' budgets.

## 4

A careful study of the figures quoted shows that they present an exact picture of the fundamental features of Russia's present-day economy.

The working people have been emancipated from their age-old oppressors and exploiters, the landowners and capitalists. This step in the direction of real freedom and real equality, a step which for its extent, dimensions and rapidity is without parallel in the world, is ignored by the supporters of the bourgeoisie (including the petty-bourgeois democrats), who, when they talk of freedom and equality, mean parliamentary bourgeois democracy, which they falsely declare to be "democracy" in general, or "pure democracy" (Kautsky).

But the working people are concerned only with real equality and real freedom (freedom from the landowners and capitalists), and that is why they give the Soviet government such solid support.

In this peasant country it was the peasantry as a whole who were the first to gain, who gained most, and gained immediately from the dictatorship of the proletariat. The peasant in Russia starved under the landowners and capitalists. Throughout the long centuries of our history, the peasant never had an opportunity to work for himself: he starved while handing over hundreds of millions of poods of grain to the capitalists, for the cities and for

export. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat the peasant *for the first time* has been working for himself and *feeding better than the city dweller*. For the first time the peasant has seen real freedom—freedom to eat his bread, freedom from starvation. In the distribution of the land, as we know, the maximum equality has been established; in the vast majority of cases the peasants are dividing the land according to the number of “mouths to feed”.

Socialism means the abolition of classes.

In order to abolish classes it is necessary, first, to overthrow the landowners and capitalists. This part of our task has been accomplished, but it is only a part, and moreover, *not* the most difficult part. In order to abolish classes it is necessary, secondly, to abolish the difference between factory worker and peasant, to make *workers of all of them*. This cannot be done all at once. This task is incomparably more difficult and will of necessity take a long time. It is not a problem that can be solved by overthrowing a class. It can be solved only by the organisational reconstruction of the whole social economy, by a transition from individual, disunited, petty commodity production to large-scale social production. This transition must of necessity be extremely protracted. It may only be delayed and complicated by hasty and incautious administrative and legislative measures. It can be accelerated only by affording such assistance to the peasant as will enable him to effect an immense improvement in his whole farming technique, to reform it radically.

In order to solve the second and most difficult part of the problem, the proletariat, after having defeated the bourgeoisie, must unswervingly conduct its policy towards the peasantry along the following fundamental lines. The proletariat must separate, demarcate the working peasant from the peasant owner, the peasant worker from the peasant huckster, the peasant who labours from the peasant who profiteers.

In this demarcation lies the *whole essence* of socialism.

And it is not surprising that the socialists who are socialists in word but petty-bourgeois democrats in deed (the Martovs, the Chernovs, the Kautskys and others) do not understand this essence of socialism.

The demarcation we here refer to is an extremely difficult one, because in real life all the features of the “peasant”, however diverse they may be, however contradictory they may be, are fused into one whole. Nevertheless, demarcation is possible; and not only is it possible, it inevitably follows from the conditions of peasant farming and peasant life. The working peasant has for ages been oppressed by the landowners, the capitalists, the hucksters and profiteers and by *their* state, including even the most democratic bourgeois republics. Throughout the ages the working peasant has trained himself to hate and loathe these oppressors and exploiters, and this “training”, engendered by the conditions of life, *compels* the peasant to seek an alliance with the worker against the capitalist and against the profiteer and huckster. Yet at the same time, economic conditions, the conditions of commodity production, inevitably turn the peasant (not always, but in the vast majority of cases) into a huckster and profiteer.

The statistics quoted above reveal a striking difference between the working peasant and the peasant profiteer. That peasant who during 1918-19 delivered to the hungry workers of the cities 40,000,000 poods of grain at fixed state prices, who delivered this grain to the state agencies despite all the shortcomings of the latter, shortcomings fully realised by the workers’ government, but which were unavoidable in the first period of the transition to socialism—that peasant is a working peasant, the comrade and equal of the socialist worker, his most faithful ally, his blood brother in the fight against the yoke of capital. Whereas that peasant who clandestinely sold 40,000,000 poods of grain at ten times the state price, taking

advantage of the need and hunger of the city worker, deceiving the state, and everywhere increasing and creating deceit, robbery and fraud—that peasant is a profiteer, an ally of the capitalist, a class enemy of the worker, an exploiter. For whoever possesses surplus grain gathered from land belonging to the whole state with the help of implements in which in one way or another is embodied the labour not only of the peasant but also of the worker and so on—whoever possesses a surplus of grain and profiteers in that grain is an exploiter of the hungry worker.

You are violators of freedom, equality, and democracy—they shout at us on all sides, pointing to the inequality of the worker and the peasant under our Constitution, to the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, to the forcible confiscation of surplus grain, and so forth. We reply—never in the world has there been a state which has done so much to remove the actual inequality, the actual lack of freedom from which the working peasant has been suffering for centuries. But we shall never recognise equality with the peasant profiteer, just as we do not recognise “equality” between the exploiter and the exploited, between the sated and the hungry, nor the “freedom” for the former to rob the latter. And those educated people who refuse to recognise this difference we shall treat as whiteguards, even though they may call themselves democrats, socialists, internationalists, Kautskys, Chernovs, or Martovs.

## 5

Socialism means the abolition of classes. The dictatorship of the proletariat has done all it could to abolish classes. But classes cannot be abolished at one stroke.

And classes still *remain* and *will remain* in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The dictatorship will become unnecessary when classes disappear. With-

out the dictatorship of the proletariat they will not disappear.

Classes have remained, but in the era of the dictatorship of the proletariat *every* class has undergone a change, and the relations between the classes have also changed. The class struggle does not disappear under the dictatorship of the proletariat; it merely assumes different forms.

Under capitalism the proletariat was an oppressed class, a class which had been deprived of the means of production, the only class which stood directly and completely opposed to the bourgeoisie, and therefore the only one capable of being revolutionary to the very end. Having overthrown the bourgeoisie and conquered political power, the proletariat has become the *ruling* class; it wields state power, it exercises control over means of production already socialised; it guides the wavering and intermediary elements and classes; it crushes the increasingly stubborn resistance of the exploiters. All these are *specific* tasks of the class struggle, tasks which the proletariat formerly did not and could not have set itself.

The class of exploiters, the landowners and capitalists, has not disappeared and cannot disappear all at once under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The exploiters have been smashed, but not destroyed. They still have an international base in the form of international capital, of which they are a branch. They still retain certain means of production in part, they still have money, they still have vast social connections. Because they have been defeated, the energy of their resistance has increased a hundred- and a thousandfold. The “art” of state, military and economic administration gives them a superiority, and a very great superiority, so that their importance is incomparably greater than their numerical proportion of the population. The class struggle waged by the overthrown exploiters against the victorious vanguard of the exploited, i.e., the proletariat, has become incomparably

more bitter. And it cannot be otherwise in the case of a revolution, unless this concept is replaced (as it is by all the heroes of the Second International) by reformist illusions.

Lastly, the peasants, like the petty bourgeoisie in general, occupy a half-way, intermediate position *even* under the dictatorship of the proletariat: on the one hand, they are a fairly large (and in backward Russia, a vast) mass of working people, united by the common interest of all working people to emancipate themselves from the landowner and the capitalist; on the other hand, they are disunited small proprietors, property-owners and traders. Such an economic position inevitably causes them to vacillate between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. In view of the acute form which the struggle between these two classes has assumed, in view of the incredibly severe break-up of all social relations, and in view of the great attachment of the peasants and the petty bourgeoisie generally to the old, the routine, and the unchanging, it is only natural that we should inevitably find them swinging from one side to the other, that we should find them wavering, changeable, uncertain, and so on.

In relation to this class—or to these social elements—the proletariat must strive to establish its influence over it, to guide it. To give leadership to the vacillating and unstable—such is the task of the proletariat.

If we compare all the basic forces or classes and their interrelations, as modified by the dictatorship of the proletariat, we shall realise how unutterably nonsensical and theoretically stupid is the common petty-bourgeois idea shared by all representatives of the Second International, that the transition to socialism is possible “by means of democracy” in general. The fundamental source of this error lies in the prejudice inherited from the bourgeoisie that “democracy” is something absolute and above classes. As a matter of fact, democracy itself passes into an entirely new phase under the dictatorship of the

proletariat, and the class struggle rises to a higher level, dominating over each and every form.

General talk about freedom, equality and democracy is in fact but a blind repetition of concepts shaped by the relations of commodity production. To attempt to solve the concrete problems of the dictatorship of the proletariat by such generalities is tantamount to accepting the theories and principles of the bourgeoisie in their entirety. From the point of view of the proletariat, the question can be put only in the following way: freedom from oppression by which class? equality of which class with which? democracy based on private property, or on a struggle for the abolition of private property?—and so forth.

Long ago Engels in his *Anti-Dühring* explained that the concept “equality” is moulded from the relations of commodity production; equality becomes a prejudice if it is not understood to mean the *abolition of classes*. This elementary truth regarding the distinction between the bourgeois-democratic and the socialist conception of equality is constantly being forgotten. But if it is not forgotten, it becomes obvious that by overthrowing the bourgeoisie the proletariat takes the most decisive step towards the abolition of classes, and that in order to complete the process the proletariat must continue its class struggle, making use of the apparatus of state power and employing various methods of combating, influencing and bringing pressure to bear on the overthrown bourgeoisie and the vacillating petty bourgeoisie.

(To be continued)

October 30, 1919

*Pravda*, No. 250,  
November 7, 1919

*Collected Works*,  
Vol. 30, pp. 107-17

## **Speech Delivered at the First All-Russia Conference on Party Work in the Countryside**

*November 18, 1919*

Comrades, unfortunately I have not been able to take part in the conference you have arranged, that is, in this conference on work in the countryside. Hence I shall have to limit myself to some general, basic considerations, and I am certain that you will be able gradually to apply these general considerations and fundamental principles of our policy to the various tasks and practical questions that come up before you.

The question of our work in the countryside is now, strictly speaking, the basic question of socialist construction in general, for insofar as the work among the proletariat and the question of uniting its forces are concerned, we can safely say that during the two years of Soviet power communist policy has not only taken definite shape but has unquestionably achieved lasting results. At first we had to fight a lack of understanding of the common interests among the workers, to fight various manifestations of syndicalism when the workers of some factories or some branches of industry tended to place their own interests, the interests of their factory or industry, above the interests of society. We had to fight a lack of discipline in the new organisation of labour, and still have to. I believe you all remember the major stages through which our policy has passed, when, as we promoted more and more workers to new posts, we gave them an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the tasks facing us,

with the general mechanism of government. The organisation of the communist activity of the proletariat and the entire policy of the Communists have now acquired a final, lasting form; I am certain that we are on the right path and that progress along that path is fully ensured.

As regards work in the countryside, the difficulties here are undoubtedly great, and we gave this question full consideration at the Eighth Congress of the Party as one of the most important issues. In the countryside as well as in the towns we can rely only on the working and exploited people, only on those who, under capitalism, bore the whole burden of the landowner and capitalist yoke. Since the time when the conquest of power by the workers abolished private property and enabled the peasants to sweep away the power of the landowners at one blow, they divided up the land and, of course, gave effect to the fullest equality and thus considerably improved the exploitation of the soil, raising it to a level above the average. It goes without saying, however, that we could not achieve everything we would have wished in this respect, for it would take tremendous funds to provide each with sufficient seed, livestock and implements as long as the land is tilled by individual peasants. Moreover, even if our industry were to achieve extraordinary progress and increase the production of agricultural machines, even if we were to imagine all our wishes fulfilled, it would still be obvious that to supply each small peasant with sufficient means of production is impossible and most irrational since it would mean a terrible fragmentation of resources; only joint, artel, co-operative labour can help us to emerge from the blind alley in which the imperialist war has driven us.

In the mass, the peasants, whose economic position under capitalism made them the most downtrodden, find it hardest of all to believe in the possibility of sharp changes and transitions. The peasant's experience of Kolchak, Yudenich, and Denikin compels him to show



especial concern about his gains. All peasants know that the permanence of their gains is not finally guaranteed, that their enemy—the landowner—has not yet been destroyed, but has gone into hiding and is waiting for his friends, the international capitalist brigands, to come to his aid. And although international capital is becoming weaker day by day and our international position has greatly improved in the recent period, if we soberly weigh all the circumstances, we have to admit that international capital is still undoubtedly stronger than we are. It no longer can openly wage war against us—its wings have already been clipped. Indeed, all these gentlemen in the European bourgeois press have latterly begun to say, “You are likely to get bogged down in Russia, perhaps it is better to make peace with her.” That is the way it always is—when the enemy is beaten, he begins talking peace. Time and again we have told these gentlemen, the imperialists of Europe, that we agree to make peace, but they continued to dream of enslaving Russia. Now they realise that their dreams are not fated to come true.

The international millionaires and multimillionaires are still stronger than we are. And the peasants see perfectly well that the attempts to seize power by Yudenich, Kolchak, and Denikin were financed by the imperialists of Europe and America. And the mass of the peasants know very well what the slightest weakness will cost them. The vivid memory of the rule of the landowners and capitalists makes the peasants reliable supporters of Soviet power. With each passing month Soviet power becomes more stable and there is growing political consciousness among the peasants who formerly laboured and were exploited and who themselves experienced the full weight of the landowner and capitalist yoke.

Things, of course, are different with the kulaks, with those who hired workers, made money by usury, and enriched themselves at the expense of the labour of

others. Most of these side with the capitalists and are opposed to the revolution that has taken place. We must clearly realise that we still have a long and stubborn fight to wage against this group of peasants. Between the peasants who shouldered the full load of the landowner and capitalist yoke and those who exploited others there is, however, a mass of middle peasants. Here lies our most difficult task. Socialists have always pointed out that the transition to socialism will raise this difficult problem—the attitude of the working class to the middle peasantry. Here it is to be expected that Communists, more than anyone else, will show a serious understanding and intelligent approach to this complicated and difficult task, and will not try to solve it at one stroke.

The middle peasants are undoubtedly accustomed to farming each for himself. They are peasant proprietors, and although they have no land as yet, although private property in land has been abolished, they remain proprietors, primarily because this group of peasants remain in possession of food products. The middle peasant produces more food than he needs for himself, and since he has surplus grain he becomes the exploiter of the hungry worker. Herein lies the main task and the main contradiction. The peasant as a working man, as a man who lives by his own labour, as one who has borne the yoke of capitalism, sides with the worker. But the peasant as a proprietor with a surplus of grain is accustomed to regarding it as his property which he can sell freely. Anyone who sells grain surpluses in a hunger-ridden country becomes a profiteer, an exploiter, because the starving man will give everything he has for bread. It is here that the biggest and hardest battle has to be fought, a battle which demands of all of us representatives of Soviet power, and especially the Communists working in the countryside, the greatest attention and most serious thought to the issue in hand and the way to approach it.

We have always said that we do not seek to force so-



cialism on the middle peasant, and the Eighth Party Congress fully confirmed this. The election of Comrade Kalinin as Chairman of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee was prompted by the need to build the closest of bonds between Soviet power and the peasantry. Thanks to Comrade Kalinin our work in the countryside has gained considerable momentum. The peasant is now undoubtedly in a position to keep in closer contact with the Soviet government through Comrade Kalinin, who represents the supreme authority of the Soviet Republic. In this way we said in effect to the middle peasant: "There can be no question of forcibly imposing socialism on anyone." But we must make him understand this, we must know how to tell him this in a language the peasant understands best of all. Here we must rely only on the force of example, successfully organised socialised farming. To give an example of *artel*, co-operative labour we must first achieve success in organising such farming ourselves. In these past two years the movement to set up agricultural communes and co-operatives has acquired tremendous scope. Looking at things soberly, however, we must say that a great many of the comrades who tackled the organisation of communes started to farm without sufficient knowledge of the economic conditions of peasant life. Undue haste and wrong approach to the question led to a tremendous number of mistakes which have had to be rectified. Time and again the old exploiters, former landowners, wormed their way into state farms. They no longer dominate there, but they have not been eliminated. It is necessary either to squeeze them out or put them under the control of the proletariat.

This is a task that confronts us in all spheres of life. You have heard of the series of brilliant victories won by the Red Army. There are tens of thousands of old colonels and officers of other ranks in that army and if we had not accepted them in our service and made them serve us, we could not have created an army. And despite

the treachery of some military specialists, we have defeated Kolchak and Yudenich, and are winning on all fronts. The reason for this is the existence of communist cells in the Red Army; they conduct propaganda and agitation carrying a tremendous impact, and thanks to them the small number of old officers find themselves in such an environment, under such a tremendous pressure from the Communists, that the majority of them are unable to break out of the communist organisation and propaganda with which we have surrounded them.

Communism cannot be built without knowledge, technique, and culture, and this knowledge is in possession of bourgeois specialists. Most of them do not sympathise with Soviet power, yet without them we cannot build communism. They must be surrounded with an atmosphere of comradeship, a spirit of communist work, and won over to the side of the workers' and peasants' government.

Among the peasants there have been frequent manifestations of extreme distrust and resentment of state farms, even complete rejection of them; we do not want state farms, they say, for the old exploiters are to be found there. We have told them—if you are unable to organise farming along new lines yourselves, you have to employ the services of old specialists; otherwise there is no way out of poverty. We shall weed out old experts who violate the decisions of the Soviet government as ruthlessly as we do in the Red Army; the struggle goes on, and it is a struggle without mercy. But we shall force the majority of the experts to work as we want them to.

This is a difficult, complex task, a task that cannot be solved at one blow. Here conscious working-class discipline and closer contact with the peasants are needed. The peasants must be shown that we are not blind to any of the abuses on the state farms, but at the same time we tell them that scientists and technicians must be enlisted in the service of socialised farming, for small-scale farming will not bring deliverance from want. And we shall do

what we are doing in the Red Army—we may be beaten a hundred times, but the hundred-and-first we defeat all our enemies. But to do this, work in the countryside must proceed by joint efforts, smoothly, in the same strict, orderly way as it has proceeded in the Red Army and as it is proceeding in other fields of economy. We shall slowly and steadily prove to the peasants the superiority of socialised farming.

This is the struggle we must wage on the state farms, this is where the difficulty of transition to socialism lies, and it is thus that Soviet power can be really and finally consolidated. When the majority of the middle peasants come to see that unless they ally themselves with the workers they are helping Kolchak and Yudenich, that in all the world only the capitalists remain with them—the capitalists who bate Soviet Russia and for years to come will repeat their attempts to restore their power—even the most backward middle peasants will realise that either they must forge ahead in alliance with the revolutionary workers towards complete emancipation or, if they vacillate even slightly, the enemy, the old capitalist exploiter, will gain the upper hand. Victory over Denikin is not enough to destroy the capitalists once and for all. This is something we all must realise. We know full well that they will try time and again to throw the noose around Soviet Russia's neck. Hence the peasant has no choice; he must help the workers, for the slightest hesitation will bring victory to the landowners and capitalists. Our primary, basic task is to help the peasants understand this. The peasant who lives by his own labour is a loyal ally of Soviet power, and the worker regards such a peasant as his equal, the workers' government does everything it can for him, indeed there is no sacrifice the workers' and peasants' government is not ready to make to satisfy the needs of such a peasant.

But the peasant who makes use of the surplus grain he possesses to exploit others is our enemy. To satisfy the

basic needs of a hungry country is a duty to the state. Yet far from all peasants realise that freedom to trade in grain is a crime against the state. "I have raised this grain, it is my product, and I have a right to do business with it," the peasant reasons out of habit, as he used to. But we say *this is a crime against the state*. Freedom to trade in grain means enriching oneself by means of this grain, i.e., a return to the old way of life, to capitalism, and this we shall not allow, this we shall fight against at all costs.

In the transition period we shall carry out state purchases of grain and requisition grain surpluses. We know that only in this way shall we be able to do away with want and hunger. The vast majority of the workers suffer hardship because of the incorrect distribution of grain; to distribute it properly, the peasants must deliver their quotas to the state as assessed, exactly, conscientiously, and without fail. Here Soviet power can make no concessions. This is not a matter of the workers' government fighting the peasants, but an issue involving the very existence of socialism, the existence of Soviet power. Today we cannot give the peasants any goods, because there is a shortage of fuel and railway traffic is being held up. We must start with the peasants lending the workers grain at fixed prices, not at profiteering prices, so that the workers can revive production. Every peasant will agree to this if it is a question of an individual worker dying from starvation before his eyes. But when millions of workers are in question, they do not understand this and the old habits of profiteering gain the upper hand.

Prolonged and persistent struggle against such habits, agitation and propaganda, explanatory work, checking up on what has been done—these are the components of our policy toward the peasantry.

We must render every support to the working peasant, treat him as an equal, without the slightest attempt to impose anything on him by force—that is our first task.

Our second task is to wage an unswerving struggle against profiteering, huckstering, ruination.

When we began to build the Red Army, we had only separate, scattered groups of guerrillas to start with. Lack of discipline and unity resulted in many unnecessary sacrifices, but we overcame these difficulties and built up a Red Army millions strong in place of the guerrilla detachments. If we were able to do this in the brief period of two years, and in a sphere as difficult and hazardous as the army, we are all the more certain that we can achieve similar results in all spheres of economic endeavour.

I am certain that although this problem of the proper attitude of the workers to the peasantry and of the correct food policy is one of the most difficult, we shall solve it and win a victory in this field such as we have won at the front.

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November 19, 1919

*Collected Works*,  
Vol. 30, pp. 143-50

### Speech Delivered at the First Congress of Agricultural Communes and Agricultural Artels

*December 4, 1919*

Comrades, I am very glad to greet your first congress of agricultural communes and agricultural artels on behalf of the government. Of course, from all the activities of the Soviet government you know what tremendous significance we attach to the communes, artels, and all organisations generally that aim at transforming and at gradually assisting the transformation of small, individual peasant farming into socialised, co-operative, or artel farming. You are aware that the Soviet government long ago allotted the sum of one thousand million rubles to assist efforts of this kind. The Statute on Socialist Agrarian Measures particularly stresses the significance of communes, artels, and all enterprises for the joint cultivation of the land, and the Soviet government is exerting every effort to ensure that this law shall not remain on paper only, but shall really produce the benefits it is intended to produce.

The importance of all enterprises of this kind is tremendous, because if the old, poverty-stricken peasant farming remains unchanged there can be no question of building up a stable socialist society. Only if we succeed in proving to the peasants in practice the advantages of common, collective, co-operative, artel cultivation of the soil, only if we succeed in helping the peasant by means of co-operative or artel farming, will the working class, which wields state power, be really able to convince the

peasant that its policy is correct and thus secure the real and lasting following of the millions of peasants. It is therefore impossible to exaggerate the importance of every measure intended to encourage co-operative, artel forms of farming. We have millions of individual farms in our country, scattered and dispersed throughout remote rural districts. It would be absolutely absurd to attempt to reshape these farms in any rapid way, by issuing an order or bringing pressure to bear from without. We fully realise that we can influence the millions of small peasant farms only gradually and cautiously and only by a successful practical example, for the peasants are far too practical and cling far too tenaciously to the old methods of farming to consent to any serious change merely on the basis of advice or book instructions. That is impossible, and it would be absurd. Only when it has been proved in practice, by experience comprehensible to the peasants, that the transition to the co-operative, artel form of farming is essential and possible, shall we be entitled to say that in this vast peasant country, Russia, an important step towards socialist agriculture has been taken. Consequently, the vast importance that attaches to communes, artels, and co-operative farms lays on all of you tremendous state and socialist obligations and naturally makes it imperative for the Soviet government and its representatives to treat this question with especial attention and caution.

In our law on socialist agrarian measures it is stated that we consider it the absolute duty of all co-operative, artel agricultural enterprises not to isolate and sever themselves from the surrounding peasant population, but to afford them assistance. This is stipulated in the law, it is repeated in the rules of all the communes, artels, and co-operatives; it is constantly stressed in the instructions and rulings of our Commissariat of Agriculture and of all Soviet government bodies. But the whole point is to find a really practical method of putting this into effect. I am

still not convinced that we have overcome this principal difficulty. And I should like your congress, at which practical workers in collective farming from all parts of Russia have the opportunity of sharing their experience, to put an end to all doubts and to prove that we are mastering, are beginning to master in practice, the task of consolidating the artels, co-operative farms, and communes and every form of enterprise for collective and socialised farming generally. But in order to prove this, *practical* results are required.

When we read the rules of the agricultural communes, or books devoted to this question, it might appear that we devote too much space in them to propaganda and the theoretical justification of the need to organise communes. Of course, that is necessary, for without detailed propaganda, without explaining the advantages of co-operative farming, and without repeating this idea thousands and thousands of times we cannot expect the broad masses of peasants to take an interest in it and undertake practical tests of the methods of carrying it into effect. Of course, propaganda is necessary, and there is no need to fear repetition, for what may appear to us to be repetition is most likely for hundreds and thousands of peasants not repetition, but a truth revealed for the first time. You may think that we are devoting too much attention to propaganda, but it must be said that we ought to devote a hundred times more. And when I say this, I mean it in the sense that if we go to the peasant with general explanations of the advantages of organising agricultural communes, and at the same time are unable in actual fact to show the practical advantage that will accrue to him from co-operative, artel farms, he will not have the slightest confidence in our propaganda.

The law says that the communes, artels, and co-operative farms must assist the surrounding peasant population. But the state, the workers' government, is providing a fund of one thousand million rubles for the purpose of assisting

the agricultural communes and artels. And, of course, if any commune were to assist the peasants out of this fund I am afraid it would only arouse ridicule among the peasants. And it would be absolutely justified. Every peasant will say: "It goes without saying that if you are getting a fund of one thousand million rubles it means nothing to you to throw a little our way." I am afraid the peasant will only jeer, for he pays considerable attention to this matter, and is very distrustful of it. He has been accustomed for centuries to expect only oppression from the state, and he is therefore in the habit of regarding everything that comes from the state with suspicion. And if the agricultural communes give assistance to the peasants merely for the purpose of fulfilling the letter of the law, such assistance will be not only useless but harmful. For the name "agricultural commune" is a great one; it is associated with the conception of communism. It will be a good thing if the communes show in practice that they are indeed seriously working for the improvement of peasant farming; that will undoubtedly enhance the prestige of the Communists and the Communist Party. But it has frequently happened that the communes have only succeeded in provoking a negative attitude among the peasantry, and the word "commune" has even at times become a call to fight communism. And this happened not only when stupid attempts were made to drive the peasants into the communes by force. The absurdity of this was so obvious that the Soviet government long ago forbade it. And I hope that if isolated examples of such coercion are to be met with now, they are very few, and that you will take advantage of the present congress to see to it that the last trace of this outrage is swept from the face of the Soviet Republic, and that the neighbouring peasant population may not be able to point to a single instance in support of the old opinion that membership of a commune is in one way or another associated with coercion.

But even if we eliminate this old shortcoming, complete-

ly suppress this outrage, it will still be only a small fraction of what has to be done. For it will still be necessary for the state to help the communes, and we would not be Communists and champions of socialist economy if we did not give state aid to every kind of collective agricultural enterprise. We must do so because it is in accordance with all our aims, and because we know perfectly well that these co-operatives, artels, and collective organisations are innovations, and if support is not given them by the working class in power they will not take root. In order that they should take root, and in view of the fact that the state is affording them monetary and every other kind of support, we must see to it that they do not provoke the ridicule of the peasants. What we must be most careful about is that the peasants should not say of members of communes, artels and co-operatives that they are state pensioners, that they differ from the peasants only by the fact that they are receiving privileges. If we are to give land and subsidies for building purposes out of the thousand-million-ruble fund, any fool will live somewhat better than the ordinary peasant. What is there communistic here, the peasant will ask, and where is the improvement? What are we to respect them for? If you pick out a few score or a few hundred individuals and give them a thousand million, of course they will work.

Such an attitude on the part of the peasants is most to be feared, and I should like to draw the attention of the comrades assembled at the congress to this. The problem must be solved practically, so as to enable us to say that we have not only averted this danger, but have also found means whereby the peasant will not be led to think in this way, but will, on the contrary, find in every commune and artel something which the state is assisting, will find in them new methods of farming which show their advantages over the old methods not by books and speeches (that is not worth much) but in practice. That is why the problem is so difficult to solve, and that is why it is hard

for us, who have only dry figures before us, to judge whether we have proved in practice that every commune and every artel is really superior to every enterprise of the old system and that the workers' government is here helping the peasant.

I think that for the practical solution of this problem, it would be very desirable for you, who have a practical acquaintance with a number of neighbouring communes, artels and co-operatives, to work out real, practical methods for the verification of the implementation of the law demanding that the agricultural communes give assistance to the surrounding population, the way the transition to socialist farming is being put into effect and what concrete forms it is taking in each commune, artel and co-operative farm, how it is actually being put into practice, how many co-operatives and communes are in fact putting it into practice, and how many are only preparing to do so, how many cases have been observed when the communes have given assistance, and what character this assistance bears—philanthropic or socialist.

If out of the aid given them by the state the communes and artels set aside a portion for the peasants, that will only give the peasants grounds for believing that they are merely being helped by kind-hearted people, but will not by any means be proof of transition to a socialist system. The peasants have for ages been accustomed to regard such "kind-hearted people" with suspicion. We must know how to keep a check on the way this new social order has manifested itself, by what methods it is being proved to the peasants that co-operative, artel cultivation of the soil is better than individual peasant farming, and that it is better *not* because of state aid. We must be able to show the peasants the practical realisation of this new order even *without* state aid.

Unfortunately, I shall not be able to stay till the end of your congress and I shall therefore be unable to take part in elaborating these methods of control. But I am

certain that with the aid of the comrades in charge of our Commissariat of Agriculture you will succeed in finding these methods. I have read with great satisfaction an article by the People's Commissar of Agriculture, Comrade Sereda, in which he stresses that the communes and co-operatives must not isolate themselves from the surrounding peasant population but must endeavour to improve the latter's farms. A commune must be organised so that it will serve as a model, and the neighbouring peasants will be attracted to it. We must be able to set them a practical example of how to assist people who are running their farms under the difficult conditions of a shortage of goods and general economic chaos. In order to define the practical methods of effecting this, instructions must be drawn up in the greatest detail and should enumerate all forms of assistance that can be given to neighbouring peasants; the instructions should ask each commune to give an account of what it has done to help the peasants, and indicate methods whereby each of the existing two thousand communes and nearly four thousand artels may become a nucleus capable of strengthening the peasants' conviction that collective farming, as a form of transition to socialism, is something of benefit to them, and not a whim or the ravings of a disordered mind.

I have already said that the law requires the communes to render assistance to the surrounding peasant population. We could not express ourselves otherwise in the law, or give any practical instructions in it. It was our business to establish the general principles, and to count on politically-conscious comrades in the localities scrupulously applying the law and being able to find a thousand ways of applying it practically in the concrete economic conditions of each given locality. But, of course, every law can be evaded, even under pretence of observing it. And so the law on 'assisting the peasants, if it is not scrupulously applied, may become a mere game, and lead to results quite contrary to those intended.

The communes must develop in such a way that peasant farming conditions will begin to change by contact with them and by the economic help they give, so that every commune, artel, and co-operative will be able to make the beginnings of an improvement in these conditions and put them into effect, thereby proving to the peasants in practice that this change can be only of benefit to them.

Naturally, you may think we shall be told that in order to improve farming we need conditions that differ from the present economic chaos caused by four years of imperialist war and the two years of civil war forced on us by the imperialists. With such conditions as now exist in our country, how can one think of any widespread improvement in farming—God grant that we may carry on somehow and not die of starvation!

It will be only natural for doubts of this kind to be expressed. But if I had to reply to such objections, I would say this: assume that owing to the disorganisation of economic life, to economic chaos, goods shortage, poor transport and the destruction of cattle and implements, an extensive improvement of farming cannot be effected. But there is no doubt that a certain, not extensive, improvement is possible in a number of individual cases. But let us assume that even this cannot be done. Does that mean that the communes cannot produce changes in the life of the neighbouring peasants and cannot prove to the peasants that collective agricultural enterprises are not an artificial, hothouse growth, but a new form of assistance to the working peasants on the part of the workers' government, and an aid to the working peasants in their struggle against the kulaks? I am convinced that even if the matter is regarded in this way, even if we grant the impossibility of effecting improvements under the present conditions of economic chaos, a very great deal may nevertheless be accomplished if there are conscientious Communists in the communes and artels.

To bear this out, I would refer to what in our cities

has been called subbotniks. This is the name given to the several hours' unpaid voluntary work done by city workers over and above the usual working day and devoted to some public need. The subbotniks were initiated in Moscow by the workers of the Moscow-Kazan Railway. One of the appeals of the Soviet government pointed out that the Red Army men at the front are making unprecedented sacrifices, and that, in spite of all the hardships they are obliged to undergo, they are gaining unprecedented victories over our enemies, and at the same time stated that we can clinch our victories only if such heroism and such self-sacrifice are displayed not only at the front, but also in the rear. The Moscow workers responded to this appeal by organising subbotniks. There can be no doubt that the workers of Moscow are experiencing greater privation and want than the peasants. If you were to acquaint yourselves with their conditions of life and give some thought to the fact that in spite of these incredibly hard conditions they were able to organise subbotniks, you would agree that no reference to arduous conditions can serve as an excuse for not doing what can be done under any conditions by applying the method of the Moscow workers. Nothing helped so much to enhance the prestige of the Communist Party in the towns, to increase the respect of non-party workers for the Communists, as these subbotniks when they ceased to be isolated instances and when non-party workers saw in practice that the members of the governing Communist Party have obligations and duties, and that the Communists admit new members to the Party not in order that they may enjoy the advantages connected with the position of a government party, but that may set an example of real communist labour, i.e., labour performed gratis. Communism is the highest stage in the development of socialism, when people work because they realise the necessity of working for the common good. We know that we cannot establish a socialist order now—God grant that it may be established in our



country in our children's time, or perhaps in our grandchildren's time. But we say that the members of the governing Communist Party assume the greater burden of the difficulties in the fight against capitalism, mobilise the best Communists for the front, and demand of such as cannot be used for this purpose that they take part in subbotniks.

By organising these subbotniks, which have become widespread in every large industrial city, participation in which the Party now demands from every one of its members, punishing non-fulfilment even by expulsion from the Party—by applying this method in the communes, artels, and co-operatives, you can, and must, even under the very worst conditions, see to it that the peasant regards every commune, artel, and co-operative as an association which is distinguished not by the fact that it receives state subsidies, but by the fact that within it are gathered some of the best working-class people who not only preach socialism for others, but are themselves capable of realising it, who are capable of showing that even under the worst conditions they can conduct their farms on communist lines and help the surrounding peasant population in every possible way. On this question there can be no such excuses as the goods shortage, or absence of seed, or loss of cattle. This will be a test which, at all events, will enable us to say definitely to what extent the difficult task we have taken on ourselves has been carried out in practice.

I am certain that this general meeting of representatives of communes, co-operatives and artels will discuss this and will realise that the application of this method will really serve as a powerful instrument for the consolidation of the communes and co-operatives, and will achieve such practical results that nowhere in Russia will there be a single case of hostility towards the communes, artels, and co-operatives on the part of the peasants. But that is not enough. What is required is that the peasants

should show a sympathetic attitude towards them. For our part, we representatives of the Soviet government will do everything in our power to help to bring this about and to see to it that state assistance from the thousand-million-ruble fund, or from other sources, shall be forthcoming only in cases when the labour communes or artels have actually established closer contacts with the life of their peasant neighbours. Unless these conditions are fulfilled, we consider any assistance given to the artels and the co-operatives not only useless, but definitely harmful. Assistance given by the communes to the neighbouring peasants must not be regarded as assistance which is merely given out of superfluity; this assistance must be socialist assistance, i.e., it must enable the peasants to replace their isolated, individual farming by co-operative farming. And this can be done only by the subbotnik method of which I have here spoken.

If you learn from the experience of the city workers, who, although living in conditions immeasurably worse than those of the peasants, initiated the movement for subbotniks, I am certain that, with your general and unanimous support, we shall bring about a situation when each of the several thousand existing communes and artels will become a genuine nursery for communist ideas and views among the peasants, a practical example showing them that, although it is still a small and feeble growth, it is nevertheless not an artificial, hothouse growth, but a true growth of the new socialist system. Only then shall we gain a lasting victory over the old ignorance, impoverishment and want, and only then will the difficulties we meet in our future course hold out no terrors for us.



## Preliminary Draft Theses on the Agrarian Question

For the Second Congress  
of the Communist International

In his article, Comrade Marchlewski gave an excellent explanation of the reasons why Second International, which has now become the yellow International, failed, not only to define the revolutionary proletariat's tactics on the agrarian question, but even to pose that question properly. Comrade Marchlewski then went on to set forth the theoretical fundamentals of the Third International's communist agrarian programme.

These fundamentals can (and, I think, should) serve as the basis of the general resolution on the agrarian question for the Communist International Congress, which will meet on July 15, 1920.

The following is a preliminary draft of that resolution:

1) Only the urban and industrial proletariat, led by the Communist Party, can liberate the working masses of the countryside from the yoke of capital and landed proprietorship, from ruin and the imperialist wars which will inevitably break out again and again if the capitalist system remains. There is no salvation for the working masses of the countryside except in alliance with the communist proletariat, and unless they give the latter devoted support in its revolutionary struggle to throw off the yoke of the landowners (the big landed proprietors) and the bourgeoisie.

On the other hand, the industrial workers cannot accomplish their epoch-making mission of emancipating

mankind from the yoke of capital and from wars if they confine themselves to their narrow craft, or trade interests, and smugly restrict themselves to attaining an improvement in their own conditions, which may sometimes be tolerable in the petty-bourgeois sense. This is exactly what happens to the "labour aristocracy" of many advanced countries, who constitute the core of the so-called socialist parties of the Second International; they are actually the bitter enemies and betrayers of socialism, petty-bourgeois chauvinists and agents of the bourgeoisie within the working-class movement. The proletariat is a really revolutionary class and acts in a really socialist manner only when it comes out and acts as the vanguard of all the working and exploited people, as their leader in the struggle for the overthrow of the exploiters; this, however, cannot be achieved unless the class struggle is carried into the countryside, unless the rural working masses are united about the Communist Party of the urban proletariat, and unless they are trained by the proletariat.

2) The working and exploited people of the countryside, whom the urban proletariat must lead into the struggle or, at all events, win over, are represented in all capitalist countries by the following classes:

first, the agricultural proletariat, wage-labourers (by the year, season, or day), who obtain their livelihood by working for hire at capitalist agricultural enterprises. The organisation of this class (political, military, trade union, co-operative, cultural, educational, etc.) independently and separately from other groups of the rural population, the conduct of intensive propaganda and agitation among this class, and the winning of its support for the Soviets and the dictatorship of the proletariat constitute the *fundamental* tasks of the Communist parties in all countries;

second, the semi-proletarians or peasants who till tiny plots of land, i.e., those who obtain their livelihood partly as wage-labourers at agricultural and industrial capital-

ist enterprises and partly by working their own or rented plots of land, which provide their families only with part of their means of subsistence. This group of the rural working population is very numerous in all capitalist countries; its existence and special position are played down by the representatives of the bourgeoisie and by the yellow "socialists" belonging to the Second International, partly by deliberately deceiving the workers and partly by blindly submitting to the routine of petty-bourgeois views and lumping together this group with the mass of the "peasantry". This bourgeois method of duping the workers is to be seen mostly in Germany and in France, but also in America and other countries. If the work of the Communist Party is properly organised, this group will become its assured supporter, for the lot of these semi-proletarians is a very hard one and they stand to gain enormously and immediately from Soviet government and the dictatorship of the proletariat;

third, the small peasantry, i.e., the small-scale tillers who, either as owners or as tenants, hold small plots of land which enable them to satisfy the needs of their families and their farms, and do not hire outside labour. This stratum, as such, undoubtedly stands to gain by the victory of the proletariat, which will fully and immediately bring it: (a) deliverance from the necessity of paying the big landowners rent or a share of the crop (for example, the *métayers* in France, also in Italy and other countries); (b) deliverance from mortgages; (c) deliverance from the numerous forms of oppression by and dependence on the big landowners (forest lands and their use, etc.); (d) immediate aid for their farms from the proletarian state (the use of the agricultural implements and part of the buildings on the big capitalist farms confiscated by the proletariat and the immediate conversion, by the proletarian state, of the rural co-operative societies and agricultural associations from organisations which under capitalism served above all the rich and middle peasants,

into organisations that will primarily assist the poor, i.e., proletarians, semi-proletarians, small peasants, etc.), and many other things.

At the same time the Communist Party must clearly realise that during the transitional period from capitalism to communism, i.e., during the dictatorship of the proletariat, this stratum, or at all events part of it, will inevitably vacillate towards unrestricted freedom of trade and the free enjoyment of the rights of private property. That is because this stratum, which, if only in a small way, is a seller of articles of consumption, has been corrupted by profiteering and by proprietary habits. However, if a firm proletarian policy is pursued, and if the victorious proletariat deals very resolutely with the big landowners and the big peasants, this stratum's vacillation cannot be considerable and cannot alter the fact that, on the whole, it will side with the proletarian revolution.

3) Taken together, the three groups enumerated above constitute the majority of the rural population in all capitalist countries. That is why the success of the proletarian revolution is fully assured, not only in the cities but in the countryside as well. The reverse view is widespread; however, it persists only, first, because of the deception systematically practised by bourgeois science and statistics, which do everything to gloss over both the gulf that separates the above-mentioned classes in the countryside from the exploiters, the landowners and capitalists, and that which separates the semi-proletarians and small peasants from the big peasants; second, it persists because of the inability and unwillingness of the heroes of the yellow Second International and of the "labour aristocracy" in the advanced countries, which has been corrupted by imperialist privileges, to conduct genuinely proletarian revolutionary work of propaganda, agitation and organisation among the rural poor; the attention of the opportunists has always been and still is wholly concentrated on inventing theoretical and practical compromises with the

bourgeoisie, including the big and middle peasants (who are dealt with below), and not on the revolutionary overthrow of the bourgeois government and the bourgeoisie by the proletariat; it persists, third, because of the obstinate refusal to understand—so obstinate as to be equivalent to a prejudice (connected with all the other bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary prejudices)—a truth which has been fully proved by Marxist theory and fully corroborated by the experience of the proletarian revolution in Russia, namely, that although the three enumerated categories of the rural population—who are incredibly downtrodden, disunited, crushed, and doomed to semi-barbarous conditions of existence in all countries, even the most advanced—are economically, socially, and culturally interested in the victory of socialism, they are capable of giving resolute support to the revolutionary proletariat only *after* the latter has won political power, only *after* it has resolutely dealt with the big landowners and capitalists, and only *after* these downtrodden people see in *practice* that they have an organised leader and champion, strong and firm enough to assist and lead them and to show them the right path.

4) In the economic sense, one should understand by “middle peasants” those small farmers who, (1) either as owners or tenants, hold plots of land that are also small but, under capitalism, are sufficient not only to provide, as a general rule, a meagre subsistence for the family and the bare minimum needed to maintain the farm, but also produce a certain surplus which may, in good years at least, be converted into capital; (2) quite frequently (for example, one farm out of two or three) resort to the employment of hired labour. A concrete example of the middle peasants in an advanced capitalist country is provided by the group of farms of five to ten hectares in Germany, in which, according to the census of 1907, the number of farms employing hired labourers is about one-

third of the total number of farms in this group.\* In France, where the cultivation of special crops is more developed—for example, grape-growing, which requires a very large amount of labour—this group probably employs outside hired labour to a somewhat greater extent.

The revolutionary proletariat cannot set itself the task—at least not in the immediate future or in the initial period of the dictatorship of the proletariat—of winning over this stratum, but must confine itself to the task of neutralising it, i.e., rendering it neutral in the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. This stratum inevitably vacillates between these two forces; in the beginning of the new epoch and in the developed capitalist countries, it will, in the main, incline towards the bourgeoisie. That is because the world outlook and the sentiments of the property-owners are prevalent among this stratum, which has a direct interest in profiteering, in “freedom” of trade and in property, and stands in direct antagonism to the wage-workers. By abolishing rent and mortgages, the victorious proletariat will immediately improve the position of this stratum. In most capitalist countries, however, the proletarian state should not at once completely abolish private property; at all events, it guarantees both the small and the middle peasantry, not only the preservation of their plots of land but also their enlargement to cover the total area they usually rented (the abolition of rent).

\* Here are the exact figures: the number of farms of five to ten hectares—652,798 (out of a total of 5,736,082); these employed 487,704 hired labourers of various kinds, while members of the farmers' families (*Familienangehörige*) working on the farms numbered 2,003,633. In Austria, according to the census of 1902, this group comprised 383,331 farms, of which 126,136 employed hired labour; the hired labourers working on these farms numbered 146,044 and the working members of the farmers' families 1,265,969. The total number of farms in Austria was 2,856,349.

A combination of such measures with a ruthless struggle against the bourgeoisie fully guarantees the success of the policy of neutralisation. The proletarian state must effect the transition to collective farming with extreme caution and only very gradually, by the force of example, without any coercion of the middle peasant.

5) The big peasants (*Grossbauern*) are capitalist *entrepreneurs* in agriculture, who as a rule employ several hired labourers and are connected with the "peasantry" only in their low cultural level, habits of life, and the manual labour they themselves perform on their farms. These constitute the biggest of the bourgeois strata who are open and determined enemies of the revolutionary proletariat. In all their work in the countryside, the Communist parties must concentrate their attention mainly on the struggle against this stratum, on liberating the toiling and exploited majority of the rural population from the ideological and political influence of these exploiters, etc.

Following the victory of the proletariat in the cities, all sorts of manifestations of resistance and sabotage, as well as direct armed action of a counter-revolutionary character on the part of this stratum, are absolutely inevitable. The revolutionary proletariat must therefore immediately begin the ideological and organisational preparation of the forces necessary to completely disarm this stratum and, simultaneously with the overthrow of the capitalists in industry, to deal this stratum a most determined, ruthless and smashing blow at the very first signs of resistance; for this purpose, the rural proletariat must be armed and village Soviets organised, in which the exploiters must have no place, and in which proletarians and semi-proletarians must be ensured predominance.

However, the expropriation even of the big peasants can in no way be made an immediate task of the victorious proletariat, because the material and especially the

technical conditions, as well as the social conditions, for the socialisation of such farms are still lacking. In individual and probably exceptional cases, those parts of their land which they rent out in small plots or which are particularly needed by the surrounding small-peasant population will be confiscated; the small peasants should also be guaranteed, on certain terms, the free use of part of the agricultural machinery belonging to the big peasants, etc. As a general rule, however, the proletarian state must allow the big peasants to retain their land, confiscating it only if they resist the power of the working and exploited people. The experience of the Russian proletarian revolution, in which the struggle against the big peasantry was complicated and protracted by a number of special conditions, showed nevertheless that, when taught a severe lesson for the slightest attempt at resistance, this stratum is capable of loyally fulfilling the tasks set by the proletarian state, and even begins to be imbued although very slowly with respect for the government which protects all who work and is ruthless towards the idle rich.

The special conditions which, in Russia, complicated and retarded the struggle of the proletariat against the big peasants after it had defeated the bourgeoisie were, in the main, the following: after October 25 (November 7), 1917, the Russian revolution passed through the stage of the "general democratic"—that is, basically the bourgeois-democratic—struggle of the peasantry as a whole against the landowners; the cultural and numerical weakness of the urban proletariat; and, lastly, the enormous distances and extremely poor means of communication. Inasmuch as these retarding conditions do not exist in the advanced countries, the revolutionary proletariat of Europe and America should prepare far more energetically, and achieve far more rapidly, resolutely, and successfully, complete victory over the resistance of the big peasantry, completely depriving it of the slightest possibility of offer-

ing resistance. This is imperative because, until such a complete and absolute victory is achieved, the masses of the rural proletarians, semi-proletarians, and small peasants cannot be brought to accept the proletarian state as a fully stable one.

6) The revolutionary proletariat must immediately and unreservedly confiscate all landed estates, those of the big landowners, who, in capitalist countries—directly or through their tenant farmers—systematically exploit wage-labour and the neighbouring small (and, not infrequently, part of the middle) peasantry, do not themselves engage in manual labour, and are in the main descended from the feudal lords (the nobles in Russia, Germany, and Hungary, the restored seigneurs in France, the lords in Britain, and the former slave-owners in America), or are rich financial magnates, or else a mixture of both these categories of exploiters and parasites.

Under no circumstances is it permissible for Communist parties to advocate or practice compensating the big landowners for the confiscated lands, for under present-day conditions in Europe and America this would be tantamount to a betrayal of socialism and the imposition of new tribute upon the masses of working and exploited people, to whom the war has meant the greatest hardships, while it has increased the number of millionaires and enriched them.

As to the mode of cultivation of the land that the victorious proletariat confiscates from the big landowners, the distribution of that land among the peasantry for their use has been predominant in Russia, owing to her economic backwardness; it is only in relatively rare and exceptional cases that state farms have been organised on the former estates which the proletarian state runs at its own expense, converting the former wage-labourers into workers for the state and members of the Soviets, which administer the state. The Communist International is of the opinion that in the case of the advanced capitalist

countries it would be correct to keep *most* of the big agricultural enterprises intact and to conduct them on the lines of the "state farms" in Russia.

It would, however, be grossly erroneous to exaggerate or to stereotype this rule and never to permit the free grant of *part* of the land that belonged to the expropriated expropriators to the neighbouring small and sometimes middle peasants.

First, the objection usually raised to this, namely, that large-scale farming is technically superior, often amounts to an indisputable theoretical truth being replaced by the worst kind of opportunism and betrayal of the revolution. To achieve the success of this revolution, the proletariat should not shrink from a temporary decline in production, any more than the bourgeois opponents of slavery in North America shrank from a temporary decline in cotton production as a consequence of the Civil War of 1863-65. What is most important to the bourgeois is production for the sake of production; what is most important to the working and exploited population is the overthrow of the exploiters and the creation of conditions that will permit the working people to work for themselves, and not for the capitalists. It is the primary and fundamental task of the proletariat to ensure the proletarian victory and its stability. There can, however, be no stable proletarian government unless the middle peasantry is neutralised and the support is secured of a very considerable section of the small peasantry, if not all of them.

Second, not merely an increase but even the preservation of large-scale production in agriculture presupposes the existence of a fully developed and revolutionary conscious rural proletariat with considerable experience of trade union and political organisation behind it. Where this condition does not yet exist, or where this work cannot expediently be entrusted to class-conscious and competent industrial workers, hasty attempts to set up large

state-conducted farms can only discredit the proletarian government. Under such conditions, the utmost caution must be exercised and the most thorough preparations made when state farms are set up.

Third, in all capitalist countries, even the most advanced, there still exist survivals of medieval, semi-feudal exploitation of the neighbouring small peasants by the big landowners as in the case of the *Instleute*\* in Germany, the *métayers* in France, and the sharecroppers in the United States (not only Negroes, who, in the Southern States, are mostly exploited in this way, but sometimes whites too). In such cases it is incumbent on the proletarian state to grant the small peasants free use of the lands they formerly rented, since no other economic or technical basis exists, and it cannot be created at one stroke.

The implements and stock of the big farms must be confiscated without fail and converted into state property, with the absolute condition that, *after* the requirements of the big state farms have been met, the neighbouring small peasants may have the use of these implements gratis, in compliance with conditions drawn up by the proletarian state.

In the period immediately following the proletarian revolution, it is absolutely necessary, not only to confiscate the estates of the big landowners at once, but also to deport or to intern them all as leaders of counter-revolution and ruthless oppressors of the entire rural population. However, with the consolidation of the proletarian power in the countryside as well as in the cities, systematic efforts should be made to employ (under the special control of highly reliable communist workers) those forces within this class that possess valuable experience, knowhow, and organising skill, to build large-scale socialist agriculture.

\* Tenant farmers.—Ed.

7) The victory of socialism over capitalism and the consolidation of socialism may be regarded as ensured only when the proletarian state power, having completely suppressed all resistance by the exploiters and assured itself complete subordination and stability, has reorganised the whole of industry on the lines of large-scale collective production and on a modern technical basis (founded on the electrification of the entire economy). This alone will enable the cities to render such radical assistance, technical and social, to the backward and scattered rural population as will create the material basis necessary to boost the productivity of agricultural and of farm labour in general, thereby encouraging the small farmers by the force of example and in their own interests to adopt large-scale, collective and mechanised agriculture. Although nominally recognised by all socialists, this indisputable theoretical truth is in fact distorted by the opportunism prevalent in the yellow Second International and among the leaders of the German and the British "Independents", the French Longuetists, etc. This distortion consists in attention being directed towards the relatively remote, beautiful, and rosy future; attention is deflected from the immediate tasks of the difficult practical transition and approach to that future. In practice, it consists in preaching a compromise with the bourgeoisie and a "class truce", i.e., complete betrayal of the proletariat, which is now waging a struggle amidst the unprecedented ruin and impoverishment created everywhere by the war, and amidst the unprecedented enrichment and arrogance of a handful of millionaires resulting from that war.

It is in the countryside that a genuine possibility of a successful struggle for socialism demands, first, that all Communist parties should inculcate in the industrial proletariat a realisation of the need to make sacrifices, and be prepared to make sacrifices so as to overthrow the bourgeoisie and consolidate proletarian power—since the

dictatorship of the proletariat implies both the ability of the proletariat to organise and lead all the working and exploited people, and the vanguard's ability to make the utmost sacrifices and to display the utmost heroism to that end; second, success demands that, as a result of the workers' victory, the labouring and most exploited masses in the countryside achieve an immediate and considerable improvement in their conditions at the expense of the exploiters—for without that the industrial proletariat cannot get the support of the rural areas and, in particular, will be unable to ensure the supply of food for the cities.

8) The enormous difficulty of organising and training for the revolutionary struggle the masses of rural working people, whom capitalism has reduced to a state of great wretchedness, disunity and frequently semi-medieval dependence, makes it necessary for the Communist parties to devote special attention to the strike struggle in the rural districts, give greater support to mass strikes by the agricultural proletarians and semi-proletarians, and help develop the strike movement in every way. The experience of the Russian revolutions of 1905 and of 1917, now confirmed and extended by the experience of Germany and other advanced countries, shows that the growing mass strike struggle (into which, under certain conditions, the small peasants can and should also be drawn) is alone capable of rousing the countryside from its lethargy, awakening the class-consciousness of the exploited masses in the countryside, making them realise the need for class organisation, and revealing to them in a vivid and practical manner the importance of their alliance with the urban workers.

This Congress of the Communist International brands as traitors and renegades those socialists—to be found, unfortunately, not only in the yellow Second International, but also in the three very important European parties which have withdrawn from that International—who are

not only capable of remaining indifferent to the strike struggle in the countryside, but even (like Karl Kautsky) of opposing it on the grounds that it threatens to reduce the output of articles of consumption. Neither programmes nor the most solemn declarations are of any value whatever unless it is proved in practice, in deed, that the Communists and workers' leaders are able to place above everything else in the world the development and the victory of the proletarian revolution, and to make the greatest sacrifices for it, for otherwise there is no way out, no salvation from starvation, ruin, and new imperialist wars.

In particular, it should be pointed out that the leaders of the old socialist movement and representatives of the "labour aristocracy"—who now often make verbal concessions to communism and even nominally side with it in order to preserve their prestige among the worker masses, which are rapidly becoming revolutionary—should be tested for their loyalty to the cause of the proletariat and their suitability for responsible positions in those spheres of work where the development of revolutionary consciousness and the revolutionary struggle is most marked, the resistance of the landowners and the bourgeoisie (the big peasants, the kulaks) most fierce, and the difference between the socialist compromiser and the communist revolutionary most striking.

9) The Communist parties must exert every effort to begin, as speedily as possible, to set up Soviets of Deputies in the countryside, and in the first place Soviets of hired labourers and semi-proletarians. Only if they are linked up with the mass strike struggle and with the most oppressed class can the Soviets perform their functions, and become consolidated enough to influence (and later to incorporate) the small peasants. If, however, the strike struggle has not yet developed, and the agricultural proletariat is as yet incapable of strong organisation owing both to the severe oppression by the landowners



and the big peasants and to lack of support from the industrial workers and their unions, then the formation of Soviets of Deputies in the rural areas will require lengthy preparation by means of the organisation of communist cells, even if only small ones, intensified agitation—in which the demands of communism are enunciated in the simplest manner and illustrated by the most glaring examples of exploitation and oppression—and the arrangement of systematic visits of industrial workers to the rural districts, and so on.

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### **Report on the Substitution of a Tax in Kind for the Surplus-Grain Appropriation System Delivered to the Tenth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.)**

*March 15, 1921*

Comrades, the question of substituting a tax for surplus-grain appropriation is primarily and mainly a political question, for it is essentially a question of the attitude of the working class to the peasantry. We are raising it because we must subject the relations of these two main classes, whose struggle or agreement determines the fate of our revolution as a whole, to a new or, I should perhaps say, a more careful and correct re-examination and some revision. There is no need for me to dwell in detail on the reasons for it. You all know very well of course what totality of causes, especially those due to the extreme want arising out of the war, ruin, demobilisation, and the disastrous crop failure—you know about the totality of circumstances that has made the condition of the peasantry especially precarious and critical and was bound to increase its swing from the proletariat to the bourgeoisie.

A word or two on the theoretical significance of, or the theoretical approach to, this issue. There is no doubt that in a country where the overwhelming majority of the population consists of small agricultural producers, a socialist revolution can be carried out only through the implementation of a whole series of special transitional measures which would be superfluous in highly developed capitalist countries where wage-workers in industry and agriculture make up the vast majority. Highly developed capitalist countries have a class of agricultural wage-workers that has taken shape over many decades. Only



such a class can socially, economically, and politically support a direct transition to socialism. Only in countries where this class is sufficiently developed is it possible to pass directly from capitalism to socialism, without any special country-wide transitional measures. We have stressed in a good many written works, in all our public utterances, and all our statements in the press, that this is not the case in Russia, for here industrial workers are a minority and petty farmers are the vast majority. In such a country, the socialist revolution can triumph only on two conditions. First, if it is given timely support by a socialist revolution in one or several advanced countries. As you know, we have done very much indeed in comparison with the past to bring about this condition, but far from enough to make it a reality.

The second condition is agreement between the proletariat, which is exercising its dictatorship, that is, holds state power, and the majority of the peasant population. Agreement is a very broad concept which includes a whole series of measures and transitions. I must say at this point that our propaganda and agitation must be open and aboveboard. We must condemn most resolutely those who regard politics as a series of cheap little tricks, frequently bordering on deception. Their mistakes have to be corrected. You can't fool a class. We have done very much in the past three years to raise the political consciousness of the masses. They have been learning most from the sharp struggles. In keeping with our world outlook, the revolutionary experience we have accumulated over the decades, and the lessons of our revolution, we must state the issues plainly—the interests of these two classes differ, the small farmer does not want the same thing as the worker.

We know that so long as there is no revolution in other countries, only agreement with the peasantry can save the socialist revolution in Russia. And that is how it must be stated, frankly, at all meetings and in the entire

press. We know that this agreement between the working class and the peasantry is not solid—to put it mildly, without entering the word “mildly” in the minutes—but, speaking plainly it is very much worse. Under no circumstances must we try to hide anything; we must plainly state that the peasantry is dissatisfied with the form of our relations, that it does not want relations of this type and will not continue to live as it has hitherto. This is unquestionable. The peasantry has expressed its will in this respect definitely enough. It is the will of the vast masses of the working population. We must reckon with this, and we are sober enough politicians to say frankly: let us re-examine our policy in regard to the peasantry. The state of affairs that has prevailed so far cannot be continued any longer.

We must say to the peasants: “If you want to turn back, if you want to restore private property and unrestricted trade in their entirety, it will certainly and inevitably mean falling under the rule of the landowners and the capitalists. This has been proved by a number of examples from history and examples of revolutions. The briefest examination of the ABC of communism and political economy will prove that this is inevitable. Let us then look into the matter. Is it or is it not in the interest of the peasantry to part ways with the proletariat only to slip back—and let the country slip back—to the rule of the capitalists and landowners? Consider this, and let us consider it together.”

We believe that if the matter is given proper consideration, the conclusion will be in our favour, in spite of the admittedly deep gulf between the economic interests of the proletariat and the small farmer.

Difficult as our position is in regard to resources, the needs of the middle peasantry must be satisfied. There are far more middle peasants now than before, the antagonisms have been smoothed out, the land has been distributed for use far more equally, the kulak's position

has been undermined and he has been in considerable measure expropriated—in Russia more than in the Ukraine, and less in Siberia. On the whole, however, statistics show quite definitely that there has been a leveling out, an equalisation, in the village, that is, the old sharp division into kulaks and cropless peasants has disappeared. Everything has become more equable, the peasantry in general has acquired the status of the middle peasant.

Can we satisfy this middle peasantry as such, with its economic peculiarities and economic roots? Any Communist who thought the economic basis, the economic roots, of small farming could be reshaped in three years was, of course, a dreamer. We need not conceal the fact that there were a good many such dreamers among us. Nor is there anything particularly bad in this. How could one start a socialist revolution in a country like ours without dreamers? Practice has, of course, shown the tremendous role all kinds of experiments and undertakings can play in the sphere of collective agriculture. But it has also afforded instances of these experiments as such playing a negative role, when people, with the best of intentions and desires, went to the countryside to set up communes but did not know how to run them because they had no experience in collective endeavour. The experience of these collective farms merely provided examples of how not to run farms: the peasants around either laughed or jeered.

You know perfectly well how many cases there have been of this kind. I repeat that this is not surprising, for it will take generations to remould the small farmer, and recast his mentality and habits. The only way to solve this problem of the small farmer—to improve, so to speak, his mentality—is through the material basis, technical equipment, the extensive use of tractors and other farm machinery and electrification on a mass scale. This would remake the small farmer fundamentally and with

tremendous speed. If I say this will take generations, it does not mean centuries. But you know perfectly well that to obtain tractors and other machinery and to electrify this vast country is a matter that may take decades in any case. Such is the objective situation.

We must try to satisfy the demands of the peasants who are dissatisfied and disgruntled, and legitimately so, and who cannot be otherwise. We must say to them: "Yes, this cannot go on any longer." How is the peasant to be satisfied and what does satisfying him mean? Where is the answer? Naturally it lies in the demands of the peasantry. We know these demands. But we must verify them and examine all that we know of the farmer's economic demands from the standpoint of economic science. If we go into this, we shall see at once that it will take essentially two things to satisfy the small farmer. The first is a certain freedom of exchange, freedom for the small private proprietor, and the second is the need to obtain commodities and products. What indeed would free exchange amount to if there was nothing to exchange, and freedom of trade, if there was nothing to trade with! It would all remain on paper, and classes cannot be satisfied with scraps of paper, they want the goods. These two conditions must be clearly understood. The second—how to get commodities and whether we shall be able to obtain them—we shall discuss later. It is the first condition—free exchange—that we must deal with now.

What is free exchange? It is unrestricted trade, and that means turning back towards capitalism. Free exchange and freedom of trade mean circulation of commodities between petty proprietors. All of us who have studied at least the elements of Marxism know that this exchange and freedom of trade inevitably lead to a division of commodity producers into owners of capital and owners of labour-power, a division into capitalists and wage-workers, i.e., a revival of capitalist wage-slavery, which does not fall from the sky but springs the world

over precisely from the agricultural commodity economy. This we know perfectly well in theory, and anyone in Russia who has observed the small farmer's life and the conditions under which he farms must have seen this.

How then can the Communist Party recognise freedom to trade and accept it? Does not the proposition contain irreconcilable contradictions? The answer is that the practical solution of the problem naturally presents exceedingly great difficulties. I can foresee, and I know from the talks I have had with some comrades, that the preliminary draft on replacing surplus-grain appropriation by a tax—it has been handed out to you—gives rise to legitimate and inevitable questions, mostly as regards permitting exchange of goods within the framework of local economic turnover. This is set forth at the end of Point 8. What does it mean, what limits are there to this exchange, how is it all to be implemented? Anyone who expects to get the answer at this Congress will be disappointed. We shall find the answer in our legislation; it is our task to lay down the principle to be followed and provide the slogan. Our Party is the government party and the decision the Party Congress passes will be obligatory for the entire Republic: it is now up to us to decide the question in principle. We must do this and inform the peasantry of our decision, for the sowing season is almost at hand. Further we must muster our whole administrative apparatus, all our theoretical forces and all our practical experience, in order to see how it can be done. Can it be done at all, theoretically speaking: can freedom of trade, freedom of capitalist enterprise for the small farmer, be restored to a certain extent without undermining the political power of the proletariat? Can it be done? Yes, it can, for everything hinges on the extent. If we were able to obtain even a small quantity of goods and hold them in the hands of the state—the proletariat exercising political power—and if we could release these goods into circulation, we, as the state, would add economic power to our

political power. Release of these goods into circulation would stimulate small farming, which is in a terrible state and cannot develop owing to the grievous war conditions and the economic chaos. The small farmer, so long as he remains small, needs a spur, an incentive that accords with his economic basis, i.e., the individual small farm. Here you cannot avoid local free exchange. If this turnover gives the state, in exchange for manufactured goods, a certain minimum amount of grain to cover urban and industrial requirements, economic circulation will be revived, with state power remaining in the hands of the proletariat and growing stronger. The peasants want to be shown in practice that the worker who controls the mills and factories—industry—is capable of organising exchange with the peasantry. And, on the other hand, the vastness of our agricultural country with its poor transport system, boundless expanses, varying climate, diverse farming conditions, etc., makes a certain freedom of exchange between local agriculture and local industry, on a local scale, inevitable. In this respect, we are very much to blame for having gone too far; we overdid the nationalisation of industry and trade, clamping down on local exchange of commodities. Was that a mistake? It certainly was.

In this respect we have made many patent mistakes, and it would be a great crime not to see it, and not to realise that we have failed to keep within bounds, and have not known where to stop. There has, of course, also been the factor of necessity—until now we have been living in the conditions of a savage war that imposed an unprecedented burden on us and left us no choice but to take war-time measures in the economic sphere as well. It was a miracle that the ruined country withstood this war, yet the miracle did not come from heaven, but grew out of the economic interests of the working class and the peasantry, whose mass enthusiasm created the miracle that defeated the landowners and capitalists. But at the same

time it is an unquestionable fact that we went further than was theoretically and politically necessary, and this should not be concealed in our agitation and propaganda. We can allow free local exchange to an appreciable extent, without destroying, but actually strengthening the political power of the proletariat. How this is to be done, practice will show. I only wish to prove to you that theoretically it is conceivable. The proletariat, wielding state power, can, if it has any reserves at all, put them into circulation and thereby satisfy the middle peasant to a certain extent—on the basis of local economic exchange.

Now a few words about local economic exchange. First of all, the co-operatives. They are now in an extreme state of decline, but we naturally need them as a vehicle of local economic exchange. Our Programme stresses that the co-operatives left over from capitalism are the best distribution network and must be preserved. That is what the Programme says. Have we lived up to this? To a very slight extent, if at all, again partly because we have made mistakes, partly because of the war-time necessity. The co-operatives brought to the fore the more business-like, economically more advanced elements, thereby bringing out the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries in the political sphere. This is a law of chemistry—you can't do anything about it! (*Laughter.*) The Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries are people who either consciously or unconsciously work to restore capitalism and help the Yudeniches. This too is a law. We must fight them. And if there is to be a fight, it must be done the military way; we had to defend ourselves, and we did. But do we have to perpetuate the present situation? No, we do not. It would be a mistake to tie our hands in this way. Because of this I submit a resolution on the question of the co-operatives; it is very brief and I shall read it to you:

"Whereas the resolution of the Ninth Congress of the R.C.P. on the co-operatives is based entirely on the principle of surplus-grain appropriation, which is now

superseded by a tax in kind, the Tenth Congress of the R.C.P. resolves:

"That the said resolution be rescinded.

"The Congress instructs the Central Committee to draw up and carry out through Party and Soviet channels decisions to improve and develop the structure and activity of the co-operatives in conformity with the Programme of the R.C.P. and with a view to substituting the tax in kind for the surplus-grain appropriation system."

You will say that this is rather vague. Yes, it is, and should necessarily be so to some extent. Why necessarily? Because if we are to be absolutely definite, we must know exactly what we are going to do over the year ahead. Who knows that? No one.

But the resolution of the Ninth Congress ties our hands by calling for "subordination to the Commissariat for Food". This is a fine institution, but it would be an obvious political mistake to subordinate the co-operatives to it and to no other, and to tie our hands, at a time when we are reviewing our attitude to the small farmers. We must instruct the newly elected Central Committee to elaborate and carry out definite measures and changes, and to check up on every step we take forward or back—to what extent we must act, how to uphold our political interests, how much relaxation there must be to make things easier, how to check up on the results of our experience. Theoretically speaking, in this respect we are facing a number of transitional stages, or transitional measures. One thing is clear: the resolution of the Ninth Congress assumed that we would be advancing in a straight line, but it turned out, as has happened again and again throughout the history of revolutions, that the movement took a zigzag course. To tie one's hands with such a resolution would be a political mistake. Annuling it, we say that we must be guided by our Programme, which stresses the importance of the co-operative machinery.

As we annul the resolution, we say: work with a view

to replacing surplus-grain appropriation by a tax. But when are we to do this? Not before the harvest, that is, in a few months' time. Will it be done the same way everywhere? In no circumstances. It would be the height of stupidity to apply the same pattern to central Russia, the Ukraine, and Siberia. I propose that this fundamental idea of unrestricted local exchange be formulated as a decision of this Congress. I presume that following this decision the Central Committee will without fail send out a letter within the next few days and will point out—doing it better than I can do here (we shall find the best writers to polish up the style)—that there are to be no radical changes, no undue haste, or snap decisions, and that things should be done so as to give maximum satisfaction to the middle peasantry, without damaging the interests of the proletariat. Try one thing and another, study things in practice, through experience, then share your experience with us, and let us know what you have managed to do, and we shall set up a special commission or even several commissions to consider the experience that has been accumulated. I think we should issue a special invitation to Comrade Preobrazhensky, the author of *Paper Money in the Epoch of the Proletarian Dictatorship*. This is a highly important question, for money circulation is a splendid test of the state of commodity circulation in the country; when it is unsatisfactory, money is not worth the paper it is printed on. In order to proceed on the basis of experience, we must check and recheck the measures we have adopted.

We shall be asked where the goods are to come from, for unrestricted trade requires goods, and the peasants are shrewd people and very good at scoffing. Can we obtain any goods now? Today we can, for our international economic position has greatly improved. We are waging a fight against the international capitalists, who, when they were first confronted by this Republic, called us "brigands and crocodiles" (I was told by an English artiste that she

had heard these very words spoken by one of the most influential politicians). Crocodiles are despicable. That was the verdict of international capital. It was the verdict of a class enemy and quite correct from his point of view. However, the correctness of such conclusions has to be verified in practice. If you are world capital—a world power—and you use words like "crocodile" and have all the technical means at your disposal, why not try and shoot it! Capital did shoot—and got the worst of it. It was then that the capitalists, who are forced to reckon with political and economic realities, declared: "We must trade." This is one of our greatest victories. Let me tell you that we now have two offers of a loan to the amount of nearly one hundred million gold rubles. We have gold, but you can't sell gold, because you can't eat it. Everybody has been reduced to a state of impoverishment, currency relations between all the capitalist countries are incredibly chaotic as a result of the war. Moreover, you need a merchant marine to communicate with Europe, and we have none. It is in hostile hands. We have concluded no treaty with France; she considers that we are her debtors and, consequently, that every ship we have is hers. They have a navy and we have none. In these circumstances we have so far been in a position to make use of our gold on a limited and ridiculously insignificant scale. Now we have two offers from capitalist bankers to float a loan of one hundred million. Of course, they will charge us an exorbitant rate of interest. Still it is their first offer of this kind; so far they have said: "I'll shoot you and take everything for nothing." Now, being unable to shoot us, they are ready to trade with us. Trade agreements with America and Britain can now be said to be almost in the bag; the same applies to concessions. Yesterday I received another letter from Mr. Vanderlip, who is here and who, besides numerous complaints, sets forth a whole series of plans concerning concessions and a loan. He represents the shrewdest type of finance capitalist

connected with the Western States of the USA, those that are more hostile to Japan. So it is economically possible for us to obtain goods. How we shall manage to do it is another question, but a certain possibility is there.

I repeat, the type of economic relations which on top looks like a bloc with foreign capitalism makes it possible for the proletarian state power to arrange for free exchange with the peasantry below. I know—and I have had occasion to say this before—that this has evoked some sneers. There is a whole intellectual-bureaucratic stratum in Moscow, which is trying to shape “public opinion”. “See what communism has come to!” these people sneer. “It’s like a man on crutches and face all bandaged up—nothing but a picture puzzle.” I have heard enough of gibes of this kind—they are either bureaucratic or just irresponsible. Russia emerged from the war in a state that can most of all be likened to that of a man beaten to within an inch of his life; the beating had gone on for seven years, and it’s a mercy she can hobble about on crutches! That is the situation we are in! To think that we can get out of this state without crutches is to understand nothing! So long as there is no revolution in other countries, it would take us decades to extricate ourselves, and in these circumstances we cannot grudge hundreds of millions’ or even thousands of millions’ worth of our immense wealth, our rich raw material sources, in order to obtain help from the major capitalists. Later we shall recover it all and to spare. The rule of the proletariat cannot be maintained in a country laid waste as no country has ever been before—a country where the vast majority are peasants who are equally ruined—without the help of capital, for which, of course, exorbitant interest will be extorted. This we must understand. Hence, the choice is between economic relations of this type and nothing at all. He who puts the question otherwise understands absolutely nothing in practical economics and is side-stepping the issue by resorting to gibes. We must recognise the fact

that the masses are utterly worn-out and exhausted. What can you expect after seven years of war in this country, if the more advanced countries still feel the effects of four years of war?!

In this backward country, the workers, who have made unprecedented sacrifices, and the mass of the peasants are in a state of utter exhaustion after seven years of war. This condition borders on complete loss of working capacity. What is needed now is an economic breathing space. We had hoped to use our gold reserve to obtain some means of production. It would be best of all to make our own machines, but even if we bought them, we would thereby build up our industry. To do this, however, you must have a worker and a peasant who can work; yet in most cases they are in no condition for it, they are exhausted, worn-out. They must be assisted, and contrary to our old Programme the gold reserve must be used for consumer goods. That Programme was theoretically correct, but practically unsound. I shall pass on to you some information I have here from Comrade Lezhava. It shows that several hundred thousand poods of various items of food have already been bought in Lithuania, Finland, and Latvia and are being shipped in with the utmost speed. Today we have learned that a deal has been concluded in London for the purchase of 18,500,000 poods of coal, which we decided to buy in order to revive the industry of Petrograd and the textile industry. If we obtain goods for the peasant, it will, of course, be a violation of the Programme, an irregularity, but we must have a respite, for the people are exhausted to a point where they are not able to work.

I must say a few words about the individual exchange of commodities. When we speak of free exchange, we mean individual exchange of commodities, which in turn means encouraging the kulaks. What are we to do? We must not close our eyes to the fact that the switch from the appropriation of surpluses to the tax will mean more kulaks under the new system. They will appear where

they could not appear before. This must not be combated by prohibitive measures but by association under state auspices and by government measures from above. If you can give the peasant machines you will help him grow, and when you provide machines or electric power, tens or hundreds of thousands of small kulaks will be wiped out. Until you can supply all that, you must provide a certain quantity of goods. If you have the goods, you have the power; to preclude, deny or renounce any such possibility means making all exchange unfeasible and not satisfying the middle peasant, who will be impossible to get along with. A greater proportion of peasants in Russia have become middle peasants, and there is no reason to fear exchange on an individual basis. Everyone can give something in exchange to the state: one, his grain surplus; another, his garden produce; a third, his labour. Basically the situation is this: we must satisfy the middle peasantry economically and go over to free exchange; otherwise it will be impossible—economically impossible—in view of the delay in the world revolution, to preserve the rule of the proletariat in Russia. We must clearly realise this and not be afraid to say it. In the draft decision to substitute a tax in kind for the surplus appropriation system (the text has been handed out to you) you will find many discrepancies, even contradictions, and that is why we have added these words at the end: "The Congress, approving in substance [this is a rather loose word covering a great deal of ground] the propositions submitted by the Central Committee to substitute a tax in kind for surplus-grain appropriation, instructs the Central Committee of the Party to co-ordinate these propositions with the utmost dispatch." We know that they have not been co-ordinated, for we had no time to do so. We did not go into the details. The ways of levying the tax in practice will be worked out in detail and the tax implemented by a law issued by the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars. The procedure

outlined is this: if you adopt the draft today, it will be given the force of a decision at the very first session of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, which will not issue a law either, but modified regulations; the Council of People's Commissars and the Council of Labour and Defence will later make them into a law, and, what is still more important, issue practical instructions. It is important that people in the localities should understand the significance of this and help us.

Why must we replace surplus appropriation by a tax? Surplus appropriation implied confiscation of all surpluses and establishment of a compulsory state monopoly. We could not do otherwise, for our need was extreme. Theoretically speaking, state monopoly is not necessarily the best system from the standpoint of the interests of socialism. A system of taxation and free exchange can be employed as a transitional measure in a peasant country possessing an industry—if this industry is running—and if there is a certain quantity of goods available.

The exchange is an incentive, a spur to the peasant. The proprietor can and will surely make an effort in his own interest when he knows that all his surplus produce will not be taken away from him and that he will only have to pay a tax, which should whenever possible be fixed in advance. The basic thing is to give the small farmer an incentive and a spur to till the soil. We must adapt our state economy to the economy of the middle peasant, which we have not managed to remake in three years, and will not be able to remake in another ten.

The state had to face definite responsibilities in the sphere of food. Because of this the appropriation quotas were increased last year. The tax must be smaller. The exact figures have not been defined, nor can they be defined. Popov's booklet, *Grain Production of the Soviet and Federated Republics*, gives the exact data issued by our Central Statistical Board and shows why agricultural production has fallen off.



If there is a crop failure, surpluses cannot be collected because there will be none. They would have to be taken out of the peasants' mouths. If there is a crop, everybody will go moderately hungry and the state will be saved, or it will perish, unless we take from people who do not eat their fill as it is. This is what we must make clear in our propaganda among the peasants. A fair harvest will mean a surplus of up to five hundred million poods. This will cover consumption and yield a certain reserve. The important thing is to give the peasants an economic incentive. The small proprietor must be told: "It is your job as a proprietor to produce, and the state will take a minimum tax."

My time is nearly up, I must close; I repeat: we cannot issue a law now. The trouble with our resolution is that it is not sufficiently legislative—laws are not written at Party congresses. Hence we propose that the resolution submitted by the C.C. be adopted as a basis and that the C.C. be instructed to co-ordinate the various propositions contained in it. We shall print the text of the resolution and Party officials in the various localities will try to co-ordinate and correct it. It cannot be co-ordinated from beginning to end; this is an insoluble problem, for life is too varied. To find the transitional measures is a very difficult task. If we are unable to do this quickly and directly, we must not lose heart, for we shall win through in the end. No peasant with the slightest glimmer of political consciousness will fail to understand that we, as the government, represent the working class and all those working people with whom the labouring peasants (and they make up nine-tenths of the total) can agree, that any turn back will mean a return to the old, tsarist government. The experience of Kronstadt proves this. There they do not want either the whiteguards or our government—and there is no other—and as a result they find themselves in a situation which speaks best of all in our favour and against any new government.

We are now in a position to come to an agreement with the peasants, and this must be done in practice, skilfully, efficiently, and flexibly. We are familiar with the apparatus of the Commissariat for Food and know that it is one of the best we have. We see that it is better than that of the others and we must preserve it. Administrative machinery, however, must be subordinated to politics. The splendid apparatus of the Commissariat for Food will be useless if we cannot establish proper relations with the peasants, for otherwise this splendid apparatus will be serving Denikin and Kolchak, and not our own class. Since resolute change, flexibility and skilful transition have become politically necessary, the leaders must realise it. A strong apparatus must be suitable for any manoeuvre, but struggle is inevitable when its strength makes it unwieldy and hampers change. All efforts must, therefore, be turned to achieving our aim: the complete subordination of the apparatus to politics. Politics are relations between classes, and that will decide the fate of our Republic. The stronger the apparatus, as an auxiliary, the better and more suitable it is for manoeuvring. If it cannot manoeuvre, it is of no use to us.

I ask you to bear in mind this basic fact—it will take several months to work out the details and interpretations. The chief thing to bear in mind at the moment is that we must let the whole world know, by wireless this very night, of our decision; we must announce that this Congress of the government party is, in the main, replacing the surplus appropriation system by a tax and is giving the small farmer certain incentives to expand his farm and plant more; that by embarking on this course the Congress is correcting the system of relations between the proletariat and the peasantry and expresses its conviction that in this way these relations will be made durable. (*Stormy applause.*)

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## Report on the Tactics of the R.C.P. to the Third Congress of the Communist International

July 5, 1921

(Excerpt)

As regards the *internal political position* of our Republic I must start with a close examination of class relationships. During the past few months changes have taken place in this sphere, and we have witnessed the formation of new organisations of the exploiting class directed against us. The aim of socialism is to abolish classes. In the front ranks of the exploiting class we find the big landowners and the industrial capitalists. In regard to them, the work of destruction is fairly easy; it can be completed within a few months, and sometimes even a few weeks or days. We in Russia have expropriated our exploiters, the big landowners as well as the capitalists. They had no organisations of their own during the war and operated merely as the appendages of the military forces of the international bourgeoisie. Now, after we have repulsed the attacks of the international counter-revolution, organisations of the Russian bourgeoisie and of all the Russian counter-revolutionary parties have been formed abroad. The number of Russian émigrés scattered in all foreign countries may be estimated at one and a half to two millions. In nearly every country they publish daily newspapers, and all the parties, landowner and petty-bourgeois, not excluding the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, have numerous ties with foreign bourgeois elements, that is to say, they obtain enough money to run their own press. We find the collaboration abroad of absolutely all the political parties that

formerly existed in Russia, and we see how the "free" Russian press abroad, from the Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik press to the most reactionary monarchist press, is championing the great landed interests. This, to a certain extent, facilitates our task, because we can more easily observe the forces of the enemy, his state of organisation, and the political trends in his camp. On the other hand, of course, it hinders our work, because these Russian counter-revolutionary émigrés use every means at their disposal to prepare for a fight against us. This fight again shows that, taken as a whole, the class instinct and class-consciousness of the ruling classes are still superior to those of the oppressed classes, notwithstanding the fact that the Russian revolution has done more than any previous revolution in this respect. In Russia, there is hardly a village in which the people, the oppressed, have not been roused. Nevertheless, if we take a cool look at the state of organisation and political clarity of views of the Russian counter-revolutionary émigrés, we shall find that the class-consciousness of the bourgeoisie is still superior to that of the exploited and the oppressed. These people make every possible attempt and skilfully take advantage of every opportunity to attack Soviet Russia in one way or another, and to dismember it. It would be very instructive—and I think the foreign comrades will do that—systematically to watch the most important aspirations, the most important tactical moves, and the most important trends of this Russian counter-revolution. It operates chiefly abroad, and it will not be very difficult for the foreign comrades to watch it. In some respects, we ought to learn from this enemy. These counter-revolutionary émigrés are very well informed, they are excellently organised and are good strategists. And I think that a systematic comparison and study of the manner in which they are organised and take advantage of every opportunity may have a powerful propaganda effect upon the working class. This is not general theory, it is practical politics; here we can see what the

enemy has learned. During the past few years, the Russian bourgeoisie has suffered a terrible defeat. There is an old saying that a beaten army learns a great deal. The beaten reactionary army has learned a great deal, and has learned it thoroughly. It is learning with great avidity, and has really made much headway. When we took power at one swoop, the Russian bourgeoisie was unorganised and politically undeveloped. Now, I think, its development is on a par with modern, West-European development. We must take this into account, we must improve our own organisation and methods, and we shall do our utmost to achieve this. It was relatively easy for us, and I think that it will be equally easy for other revolutions, to cope with these two exploiting classes.

But, in addition to this class of exploiters, there is in nearly all capitalist countries, with the exception, perhaps, of Britain, a class of small producers and small farmers. The main problem of the revolution now is how to fight these two classes. In order to be rid of them, we must adopt methods other than those employed against the big landowners and capitalists. We could simply expropriate and expel both of these classes, and that is what we did. But we cannot do the same thing with the remaining capitalist classes, the small producers and the petty bourgeoisie, which are found in all countries. In most capitalist countries, these classes constitute a very considerable minority, approximately from thirty to forty-five per cent of the population. Add to them the petty-bourgeois elements of the working class, and you get even more than fifty per cent. These cannot be expropriated or expelled; other methods of struggle must be adopted in their case. From the international standpoint, if we regard the international revolution as one process, the significance of the period into which we are now entering in Russia is, in essence, that we must now find a practical solution for the problem of the relations the proletariat should establish with this last capitalist class in Russia. All

Marxists have a correct and ready solution for this problem in theory. But theory and practice are two different things, and the practical solution of this problem is by no means the same as the theoretical solution. We know definitely that we have made serious mistakes. From the international standpoint, it is a sign of great progress that we are now trying to determine the attitude the proletariat in power should adopt towards the last capitalist class—the rock-bottom of capitalism—small private property, the small producer. This problem now confronts us in a practical way. I think we shall solve it. At all events, the experiment we are making will be useful for future proletarian revolutions, and they will be able to make better technical preparations for solving it.

In my theses I tried to analyse *the problem of the relations between the proletariat and the peasantry*. For the first time in history there is a state with only two classes, the proletariat and the peasantry. The latter constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population. It is, of course, very backward. How do the relations between the peasantry and the proletariat, which holds political power, find practical expression in the development of the revolution? The first form is alliance, close alliance. This is a very difficult task, but at any rate it is economically and politically feasible.

How did we approach this problem practically? We concluded an alliance with the peasantry. We interpret this alliance in the following way: the proletariat emancipates the peasantry from the exploitation of the bourgeoisie, from its leadership and influence, and wins it over to its own side in order jointly to defeat the exploiters.

The Menshevik argument runs like this: the peasantry constitutes a majority; we are pure democrats, therefore, the majority should decide. But as the peasantry cannot operate on its own, this, in practice, means nothing more nor less than the restoration of capitalism. The slogan is

the same: Alliance with the peasantry. When we say that, we mean strengthening and consolidating the proletariat. We have tried to give effect to this alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry, and the first stage was a military alliance. The three years of the Civil War created enormous difficulties, but in certain respects they facilitated our task. This may sound odd, but it is true. The war was not something new for the peasants; a war against the exploiters, against the big landowners, was something they quite understood. The overwhelming majority of the peasants were on our side. In spite of the enormous distances, and the fact that the overwhelming majority of our peasants are unable to read or write, they assimilated our propaganda very easily. This proves that the broad masses—and this applies also to the most advanced countries—learn faster from their own practical experience than from books. In Russia, moreover, learning from practical experience was facilitated for the peasantry by the fact that the country is so exceptionally large that in the same period different parts of it were passing through different stages of development.

In Siberia and in the Ukraine the counter-revolution was able to gain a temporary victory because there the bourgeoisie had the peasantry on its side, because the peasants were against us. The peasants frequently said, "We are Bolsheviks, but not Communists. We are for the Bolsheviks because they drove out the landowners; but we are not for the Communists because they are opposed to individual farming." And for a time, the counter-revolution managed to win out in Siberia and in the Ukraine because the bourgeoisie made headway in the struggle for influence over the peasantry. But it took only a very short time to open the peasants' eyes. They quickly acquired practical experience and soon said, "Yes, the Bolsheviks are rather unpleasant people, we don't like them, but still they are better than the whiteguards and the Constituent Assembly." "Constituent Assembly" is a term of

abuse not only among the educated Communists, but also among the peasants. They know from practical experience that the Constituent Assembly and the whiteguards stand for the same thing, that the former is inevitably followed by the latter. The Mensheviks also resort to a military alliance with the peasantry, but they fail to understand that a military alliance alone is inadequate. There can be no military alliance without an economic alliance. It takes more than air to keep a man alive; our alliance with the peasantry could not possibly have lasted any length of time without the economic foundation, which was the basis of our victory in the war against our bourgeoisie. After all our bourgeoisie has united with the whole of the international bourgeoisie.

The basis of our economic alliance with the peasantry was, of course, very simple, and even crude. The peasant obtained from us all the land and support against the big landowners. In return for this, we were to obtain food. This alliance was something entirely new and did not rest on the ordinary relations between commodity producers and consumers. Our peasants had a much better understanding of this than the heroes of the Second and the Two-and-a-Half Internationals. They said to themselves, "These Bolsheviks are stern leaders, but after all they are our own people." Be that as it may, we created in this way the foundations of a new economic alliance. The peasants gave their produce to the Red Army and received from the latter assistance in protecting their possessions. This is always forgotten by the heroes of the Second International, who, like Otto Bauer, totally fail to understand the actual situation. We confess that the initial form of this alliance was very primitive and that we made very many mistakes. But we were obliged to act as quickly as possible, we had to organise supplies for the army at all costs. During the Civil War we were cut off from all the grain districts of Russia. We were in a terrible position, and it looks like a miracle that the Russian people and the

working class were able to endure such suffering, want, and privation, sustained by nothing more than a deep urge for victory. (*Animated approval and applause.*)

When the Civil War came to an end, however, we faced a different problem. If the country had not been so laid waste after seven years of incessant war, it would, perhaps, have been possible to find an easier transition to the new form of alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry. But bad as conditions in the country were, they were still further aggravated by the crop failure, the fodder shortage, etc. In consequence, the sufferings of the peasants became unbearable. We had to show the broad masses of the peasants immediately that we were prepared to change our policy, without in any way deviating from our revolutionary path, so that they could say, "The Bolsheviks want to improve our intolerable condition immediately, and at all costs."

And so, *our economic policy was changed*; the tax in kind superseded the requisitions. This was not invented at one stroke. You will find a number of proposals in the Bolshevik press over a period of months, but no plan that really promised success. But this is not important. The important thing is that we changed our economic policy, yielding to exclusively practical considerations, and impelled by necessity. A bad harvest, fodder shortage and lack of fuel—all, of course, have a decisive influence on the economy as a whole, including the peasant economy. If the peasantry goes on strike, we get no firewood; and if we get no firewood, the factories will have to idle. Thus, in the spring of 1921, the economic crisis resulting from the terrible crop failure and the fodder shortage assumed gigantic proportions. All that was the aftermath of the three years of civil war. We had to show the peasantry that we could and would quickly change our policy in order immediately to alleviate their distress. We have always said—and it was also said at the Second Congress—that revolution demands sacrifices. Some comrades

in their propaganda argue in the following way: we are prepared to stage a revolution, but it must not be too severe. Unless I am mistaken, this thesis was put forward by Comrade Smeral in his speech at the Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. I read about it in the report published in the Reichenberg *Vorwärts*. There is evidently a Leftist wing there; hence this source cannot be regarded as being quite impartial. At all events, I must say that if Smeral did say that, he was wrong. Some comrades who spoke after Smeral at this Congress said, "Yes, we shall go along with Smeral because in this way we shall avoid civil war." (*Laughter.*) If these reports are true, I must say that such agitation is neither communistic nor revolutionary. Naturally, every revolution entails enormous sacrifice on the part of the class making it. Revolution differs from ordinary struggle in that ten and even a hundred times more people take part in it. Hence every revolution entails sacrifices not only for individuals, but for a whole class. The dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia has entailed for the ruling class—the proletariat—sacrifices, want and privation unprecedented in history, and the case will, in all probability, be the same in every other country.

The question arises: *How are we to distribute this burden of privation?* We are the state power. We are able to distribute the burden of privation to a certain extent, and to impose it upon several classes, thereby relatively alleviating the condition of certain strata of the population. But what is to be our principle? Is it to be that of fairness, or of majority? No. We must act in a practical manner. We must distribute the burdens in such a way as to preserve the power of the proletariat. This is our only principle. In the beginning of the revolution the working class was compelled to suffer incredible want. Let me state that from year to year our food policy has been achieving increasing success. And the situation as a whole has undoubtedly improved. But the peasantry in Russia has

certainly gained more from the revolution than the working class. There is no doubt about that at all. From the standpoint of theory, this shows, of course, that our revolution was to some degree a bourgeois revolution. When Kautsky used this as an argument against us, we laughed. Naturally, a revolution which does not expropriate the big landed estates, expel the big landowners or divide the land is only a bourgeois revolution and not a socialist one. But we were the only party to carry the bourgeois revolution to its conclusion and to facilitate the struggle for the socialist revolution. The Soviet power and the Soviet system are institutions of the socialist state. We have already established these institutions, but we have not yet solved the problem of economic relations between the peasantry and the proletariat. Much remains to be done, and the outcome of this struggle depends upon whether we solve this problem or not. Thus, the distribution of the burden of privation is one of the most difficult practical problems. On the whole, the condition of the peasants has improved, but dire suffering has fallen to the lot of the working class, precisely because it is exercising its dictatorship.

I have already said that in the spring of 1921 the most appalling want caused by the fodder shortage and the crop failure prevailed among the peasantry, which constitutes the majority of our population. We cannot possibly exist unless we have good relations with the peasant masses. Hence, our task was to render them immediate assistance. The condition of the working class is extremely hard. It is suffering horribly. Those who have more political understanding, however, realise that in the interest of the dictatorship of the working class we must make tremendous efforts to help the peasants at any price. The vanguard of the working class has realised this, but in that vanguard there are still people who cannot understand it, and who are too weary to understand it. They regarded it as a mistake and began to use

the word "opportunism". They said, "The Bolsheviks are helping the peasants. The peasants, who are exploiting us, are getting everything they please, while the workers are starving." But is that opportunism? We are helping the peasants because without an alliance with them the political power of the proletariat is impossible, its preservation is inconceivable. It was this consideration of expediency and not that of fair distribution that was decisive for us. We are assisting the peasants because it is absolutely necessary to do so in order that we may retain political power. The supreme principle of the dictatorship is the maintenance of the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry in order that the proletariat may retain its leading role and its political power.

The only means we found for this was the *adoption of the tax in kind*, which was the inevitable consequence of the struggle. This year, we shall introduce this tax for the first time. This principle has not yet been tried in practice. From the military alliance we must pass to an economic alliance, and, theoretically, the only basis for the latter is the introduction of the tax in kind. It provides the only theoretical possibility for laying a really solid economic foundation for socialist society. The socialised factory gives the peasant its manufactures and in return the peasant gives his grain. This is the only possible form of existence of socialist society, the only form of socialist development in a country in which the small peasants constitute the majority, or at all events a very considerable minority. The peasants will give one part of their produce in the form of tax and another either in exchange for the manufactures of socialist factories, or through the exchange of commodities.

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**Political Report of the Central Committee  
of the R.C.P.(B.)  
Delivered at the Eleventh Congress  
of the R.C.P.(B.)**

*March 27, 1922*

*(Excerpt)*

The New Economic Policy is, of course, the major question. This has been the dominant question throughout the year under review. If we have any important, serious and irrevocable gain to record for this year (and I am not so very sure that we have), it is that we have learnt something from the launching of this New Economic Policy. If we have learnt even a little, then, during the past year, we have learnt a great deal in this field. And the test of whether we have really learnt anything, and to what extent, will probably be made by subsequent events of a kind which we ourselves can do little to determine, as for example the impending financial crisis. It seems to me that in connection with the New Economic Policy, the most important things to keep in mind as a basis for all our arguments, as a means of testing our experience during the past year, and of learning practical lessons for the ensuing year are contained in the following three points.

First, the New Economic Policy is important for us primarily as a means of testing whether we are really establishing a link with the peasant economy. In the preceding period of development of our revolution, when all our attention and all our efforts were concentrated mainly on, or almost entirely absorbed by, the task of repelling invasion, we could not devote the necessary attention to this link; we had other things to think about.

To some extent we could and had to ignore this bond when we were confronted by the absolutely urgent and overshadowing task of warding off the danger of being immediately crushed by the gigantic forces of world imperialism.

The turn towards the New Economic Policy was decided on at the last Congress with exceptional unanimity, with even greater unanimity than other questions have been decided by our Party (which, it must be admitted, is generally distinguished for its unanimity). This unanimity showed that the need for a new approach to socialist economy had fully matured. People who differed on many questions, and who assessed the situation from different angles, unanimously and very quickly and unhesitatingly agreed that we lacked a real approach to socialist economy, to the task of building its foundation; that the only means of finding this approach was the New Economic Policy. Owing to the course taken by the development of war events, by the development of political events, by the development of capitalism in the old, civilised West, and owing also to the social and political conditions that developed in the colonies, we were the first to make a breach in the old bourgeois world at a time when our country was economically, if not the most backward, at any rate one of the most backward countries in the world. The vast majority of the peasants in our country are engaged in small individual farming. The items of our programme of building a communist society, that we could apply immediately, were to some extent outside the sphere of activity of the broad mass of the peasantry, upon whom we imposed very heavy obligations, which we justified on the grounds that war permitted no wavering in this matter. Taken as a whole, this was accepted as justification by the peasantry, notwithstanding the mistakes we could not avoid. On the whole, the mass of the peasantry realised and understood that the enormous burdens imposed upon them were



necessary in order to save the workers' and peasants' rule from the landowners and prevent it from being strangled by capitalist invasion, which threatened to wrest away all the gains of the revolution. But there was no link between the peasant economy and the economy that was being built up in the nationalised, socialised factories and on state farms.

We saw this clearly at the last Party Congress. We saw it so clearly that there was no hesitation whatever in the Party on the question as to whether the New Economic Policy was inevitable or not.

It is amusing to read what is said about our decision in the numerous publications of the various Russian parties abroad. There are only trifling differences in the opinions they express. Living with memories of the past, they still continue to reiterate that to this day the Left Communists are opposed to the New Economic Policy. In 1921 they remembered what had occurred in 1918 and what our Left Communists themselves have forgotten; and they go on chewing this over and over again, assuring the world that these Bolsheviks are a sly and false lot, and that they are concealing from Europe that they have disagreements in their ranks. Reading this, one says to oneself, "Let them go on fooling themselves." If this is what they imagine is going on in this country, we can judge the degree of intelligence of these allegedly highly educated old fogies who have fled abroad. We know that there have been no disagreements in our ranks, and the reason for this is that the practical necessity of a different approach to the task of building the foundation of socialist economy was clear to all.

There was no link between the peasant economy and the new economy we tried to create. Does it exist now? Not yet. We are only approaching it. The whole significance of the New Economic Policy—which our press still often searches for everywhere except where it should search—the whole purpose of this policy is to find a way

of establishing a link between the new economy, which we are creating with such enormous effort, and the peasant economy. That is what stands to our credit; without it we would not be communist revolutionaries.

We began to develop the new economy in an entirely new way, brushing aside everything old. Had we not begun to develop it we would have been utterly defeated in the very first months, in the very first years. But the fact that we began to develop this new economy with such splendid audacity does not mean that we must necessarily continue in the same way. Why should we? There is no reason.

From the very beginning we said that we had to undertake an entirely new task, and that unless we received speedy assistance from our comrades, the workers in the capitalistically more developed countries, we should encounter incredible difficulties and certainly make a number of mistakes. The main thing is to be able dispassionately to examine where such mistakes have been made and to start again from the beginning. If we begin from the beginning, not twice, but many times, it will show that we are not bound by prejudice, and that we are approaching our task, which is the greatest the world has ever seen, with a sober outlook.

Today, as far as the New Economic Policy is concerned the main thing is to assimilate the experience of the past year correctly. That must be done, and we want to do it. And if we want to do it, come what may (and we do want to do it, and shall do it!), we must know that the problem of the New Economic Policy, the fundamental, decisive and overriding problem, is to establish a link between the new economy that we have begun to create (very badly, very clumsily, but have nevertheless begun to create, on the basis of an entirely new, socialist economy, of a new system of production and distribution) and the peasant economy, by which millions and millions of peasants obtain their livelihood.

This link has been lacking, and we must create it before anything else. Everything else must be subordinated to this. We have still to ascertain the extent to which the New Economic Policy has succeeded in creating this link without destroying what we have begun so clumsily to build.

We are developing our economy together with the peasantry. We shall have to alter it many times and organise it in such a way that it will provide a link between our socialist work on large-scale industry and agriculture and the work every peasant is doing as best he can, struggling out of poverty, without philosophising (for how can philosophising help him to extricate himself from his position and save him from the very real danger of a painful death from starvation?).

We must reveal this link so that we may see it clearly, so that all the people may see it, and so that the whole mass of the peasantry may see that there is a connection between their present severe, incredibly ruined, incredibly impoverished and painful existence and the work which is being done for the sake of remote socialist ideals. We must bring about a situation where the ordinary, rank-and-file working man realises that he has obtained some improvement, and that he has obtained it not in the way a few peasants obtained improvements under the rule of landowners and capitalists, when every improvement (undoubtedly there were improvements and very big ones) was accompanied by insult, derision and humiliation for the muzhik, by violence against the masses, which not a single peasant has forgotten, and which will not be forgotten in Russia for decades. Our aim is to restore the link, to prove to the peasant by deeds that we are beginning with what is intelligible, familiar and immediately accessible to him, in spite of his poverty, and not with something remote and fantastic from the peasant's point of view. We must prove that we can help him and that in this period, when the

small peasant is in a state of appalling ruin, impoverishment and starvation, the Communists are really helping him. Either we prove that, or he will send us to the devil. That is absolutely inevitable.

Such is the significance of the New Economic Policy; it is the basis of our entire policy; it is the major lesson taught by the whole of the past year's experience in applying the New Economic Policy, and, so to speak, our main political rule for the coming year. The peasant is allowing us credit, and, of course, after what he has lived through, he cannot do otherwise. Taken in the mass, the peasants go on saying: "Well, if you are not able to do it yet, we shall wait; perhaps you will learn." But this credit cannot go on for ever.

This we must know; and having obtained credit we must hurry. We must know that the time is approaching when this peasant country will no longer give us credit, when it will demand cash, to use a commercial term. It will say: "You have postponed payment for so many months, so many years. But by this time, dear rulers, you must have learnt the most sound and reliable method of helping us free ourselves from poverty, want, starvation and ruin. You can do it, you have proved it." This is the test that we shall inevitably have to face; and, in the last analysis, this test will decide everything: the fate of NEP and the fate of communist rule in Russia.

Shall we accomplish our immediate task or not? Is this NEP fit for anything or not? If the retreat turns out to be correct tactics, we must link up with the peasant masses while we are in retreat, and subsequently march forward with them a hundred times more slowly, but firmly and unswervingly, in a way that will always make it apparent to them that we are really marching forward. Then our cause will be absolutely invincible, and no power on earth can vanquish us. We did not accomplish this in the first year. We must say this frankly. And I am profoundly convinced (and our New Economic Policy enables us to

draw this conclusion quite definitely and firmly) that if we appreciate the enormous danger harboured by NEP and concentrate all our forces on its weak points, we shall solve this problem.

Link up with the peasant masses, with the rank-and-file working peasants, and begin to move forward immeasurably, infinitely more slowly than we expected, but in such a way that the entire mass will actually move forward with us. If we do that we shall in time progress much more quickly than we even dream of today. This, in my opinion, is the first fundamental political lesson of the New Economic Policy.

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## On Co-operation

### I

It seems to me that not enough attention is being paid to the co-operative movement in our country. Not everyone understands that now, since the time of the October Revolution and quite apart from NEP (on the contrary, in this connection we must say—because of NEP), our co-operative movement has become one of great significance. There is a lot of fantasy in the dreams of the old co-operators. Often they are ridiculously fantastic. But why are they fantastic? Because people do not understand the fundamental, the rock-bottom significance of the working-class political struggle for the overthrow of the rule of the exploiters. We have overthrown the rule of the exploiters, and much that was fantastic, even romantic, even banal in the dreams of the old co-operators is now becoming unvarnished reality.

Indeed, since political power is in the hands of the working class, since this political power owns all the means of production, the only task, indeed, that remains for us is to organise the population in co-operative societies. With most of the population organised in co-operatives, the socialism which in the past was legitimately treated with ridicule, scorn and contempt by those who were rightly convinced that it was necessary to wage the class struggle, the struggle for political power, etc., will achieve its aim automatically. But not all comrades realise how vastly, how infinitely important it is now to organise

the population of Russia in co-operative societies. By adopting NEP we made a concession to the peasant as a trader, to the principle of private trade; it is precisely for this reason (contrary to what some people think) that the co-operative movement is of such immense importance. All we actually need under NEP is to organise the population of Russia in co-operative societies on a sufficiently large scale, for we have now found that degree of combination of private interest, of private commercial interest, with state supervision and control of this interest, that degree of its subordination to the common interests which was formerly the stumbling-block for very many socialists. Indeed, the power of the state over all large-scale means of production, political power in the hands of the proletariat, the alliance of this proletariat with the many millions of small and very small peasants, the assured proletarian leadership of the peasantry, etc.—is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society out of co-operatives, out of co-operatives alone, which we formerly ridiculed as huckstering and which from a certain aspect we have the right to treat as such now, under NEP? Is this not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society? It is still not the building of socialist society, but it is all that is necessary and sufficient for it.

It is this very circumstance that is underestimated by many of our practical workers. They look down upon our co-operative societies, failing to appreciate their exceptional importance, first, from the standpoint of principle (the means of production are owned by the state), and, second, from the standpoint of transition to the new system by means that are the *simplest, easiest and most acceptable to the peasant*.

But this again is of fundamental importance. It is one thing to draw up fantastic plans for building socialism through all sorts of workers' associations, and quite another to learn to build socialism in practice in such

a way that *every* small peasant could take part in it. That is the very stage we have now reached. And there is no doubt that, having reached it, we are taking too little advantage of it.

We went too far when we introduced NEP, but not because we attached too much importance to the principle of free enterprise and trade—we went too far because we lost sight of the co-operatives, because we now underrate the co-operatives, because we are already beginning to forget the vast importance of the co-operatives from the above two points of view.

I now propose to discuss with the reader what can and must at once be done practically on the basis of this "co-operative" principle. By what means can we, and must we, start at once to develop this "co-operative" principle so that its socialist meaning may be clear to all?

Co-operation must be politically so organised that it will not only generally and always enjoy certain privileges, but that these privileges should be of a purely material nature (a favourable bank-rate, etc.). The co-operatives must be granted state loans that are greater, if only by a little, than the loans we grant to private enterprises, even to heavy industry, etc.

A social system emerges only if it has the financial backing of a definite class. There is no need to mention the hundreds of millions of rubles that the birth of "free" capitalism cost. At present we have to realise that the co-operative system is the social system we must now give more than ordinary assistance, and we must actually give that assistance. But it must be assistance in the real sense of the word, i.e., it will not be enough to interpret it to mean assistance for any kind of co-operative trade; by assistance we must mean aid to co-operative trade in which *really large masses of the population actually take part*. It is certainly a correct form of assistance to give a bonus to peasants who take part in co-operative trade;

but the whole point is to verify the nature of this participation, to verify the awareness behind it, and to verify its quality. Strictly speaking, when a co-operator goes to a village and opens a co-operative store, the people take no part in this whatever; but at the same time guided by their own interests they will hasten to try to take part in it.

There is another aspect to this question. From the point of view of the "enlightened" (primarily, literate) European there is not much left for us to do to induce absolutely everyone to take not a passive, but an active part in co-operative operations. Strictly speaking, there is "only" one thing we have left to do and that is to make our people so "enlightened" that they understand all the advantages of everybody participating in the work of the co-operatives, and organise this participation. "Only" that. There are now no other devices needed to advance to socialism. But to achieve this "only", there must be a veritable revolution—the entire people must go through a period of cultural development. Therefore, our rule must be: as little philosophising and as few acrobatics as possible. In this respect NEP is an advance, because it is adjustable to the level of the most ordinary peasant and does not demand anything higher of him. But it will take a whole historical epoch to get the entire population into the work of the co-operatives through NEP. At best we can achieve this in one or two decades. Nevertheless, it will be a distinct historical epoch, and without this historical epoch, without universal literacy, without a proper degree of efficiency, without training the population sufficiently to acquire the habit of book-reading, and without the material basis for this, without a certain sufficiency to safeguard against, say, bad harvests, famine, etc.—without this we shall not achieve our object. The thing now is to learn to combine the wide revolutionary range of action, the revolutionary enthusiasm which we have displayed, and displayed abundantly, and

crowned with complete success—to learn to combine this with (I am almost inclined to say) the ability to be an efficient and capable trader, which is quite enough to be a good co-operator. By ability to be a trader I mean the ability to be a cultured trader. Let those Russians, or peasants, who imagine that since they trade they are good traders, get that well into their heads. This does not follow at all. They do trade in an Asiatic manner, but to be a good trader one must trade in the European manner. They are a whole epoch behind in that.

In conclusion: a number of economic, financial and banking privileges must be granted to the co-operatives—this is the way our socialist state must promote the new principle on which the population must be organised. But this is only the general outline of the task; it does not define and depict in detail the entire content of the practical task, i.e., we must find what form of "bonus" to give for joining the co-operatives (and the terms on which we should give it), the form of bonus by which we shall assist the co-operatives sufficiently, the form of bonus that will produce the civilised co-operator. And given social ownership of the means of production, given the class victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, the system of civilised co-operators is the system of socialism.

January 4, 1923

## II

Whenever I wrote about the New Economic Policy I always quoted the article on state capitalism which I wrote in 1918. This has more than once aroused doubts in the minds of certain young comrades. But their doubts were mainly on abstract political points.

It seemed to them that the term "state capitalism" could not be applied to a system under which the means of production were owned by the working class, a working

class that held political power. They did not notice, however, that I used the term "state capitalism", *firstly*, to connect historically our present position with the position adopted in my controversy with the so-called Left Communists; also, I argued at the time that state capitalism would be superior to our existing economy. It was important for me to show the continuity between ordinary state capitalism and the unusual, even very unusual, state capitalism to which I referred in introducing the reader to the New Economic Policy. *Secondly*, the practical purpose was always important to me. And the practical purpose of our New Economic Policy was to lease out concessions. In the prevailing circumstances, concessions in our country would unquestionably have been a pure type of state capitalism. That is how I argued about state capitalism.

But there is another aspect of the matter for which we may need state capitalism, or at least a comparison with it. It is the question of co-operatives.

In the capitalist state, co-operatives are no doubt collective capitalist institutions. Nor is there any doubt that under our present economic conditions, when we combine private capitalist enterprises—but in no other way than on nationalised land and in no other way than under the control of the working-class state—with enterprises of a consistently socialist type (the means of production, the land on which the enterprises are situated, and the enterprises as a whole belonging to the state), the question arises about a third type of enterprise, the co-operatives, which were not formerly regarded as an independent type differing fundamentally from the others. Under private capitalism, co-operative enterprises differ from capitalist enterprises as collective enterprises differ from private enterprises. Under state capitalism, co-operative enterprises differ from state capitalist enterprises, *firstly*, because they are private enterprises, and, *secondly*, because they are collective enterprises. Under

our present system, co-operative enterprises differ from private capitalist enterprises because they are collective enterprises, but do not differ from socialist enterprises if the land on which they are situated and the means of production belong to the state, i.e., the working class.

This circumstance is not considered sufficiently when co-operatives are discussed. It is forgotten that owing to the special features of our political system, our co-operatives acquire an altogether exceptional significance. If we exclude concessions, which, incidentally, have not developed on any considerable scale, co-operation under our conditions nearly always coincides fully with socialism.

Let me explain what I mean. Why were the plans of the old co-operators, from Robert Owen onwards, fantastic? Because they dreamed of peacefully remodelling contemporary society into socialism without taking account of such fundamental questions as the class struggle, the capture of political power by the working class, the overthrow of the rule of the exploiting class. That is why we are right in regarding as entirely fantastic this "co-operative" socialism, and as romantic, and even banal, the dream of transforming class enemies into class collaborators and class war into class peace (so-called class truce) by merely organising the population in co-operative societies.

Undoubtedly we were right from the point of view of the fundamental task of the present day, for socialism cannot be established without a class struggle for political power in the state.

But see how things have changed now that political power is in the hands of the working class, now that the political power of the exploiters is overthrown and all the means of production (except those which the workers' state voluntarily abandons in specified terms and for a certain time to the exploiters in the form of concessions) are owned by the working class.

Now we are entitled to say that for us the mere growth of co-operation (with the "slight" exception mentioned above) is identical with the growth of socialism, and at the same time we have to admit that there has been a radical modification in our whole outlook on socialism. The radical modification is this; formerly we placed, and had to place, the main emphasis on the political struggle, on revolution, on winning political power, etc. Now the emphasis is changing and shifting to peaceful, organisational, "cultural" work. I should say that emphasis is shifting to educational work, were it not for our international relations, were it not for the fact that we have to fight for our position on a world scale. If we leave that aside, however, and confine ourselves to internal economic relations, the emphasis in our work is certainly shifting to education.

Two main tasks confront us, which constitute the epoch—to reorganise our machinery of state, which is utterly useless, and which we took over in its entirety from the preceding epoch; during the past five years of struggle we did not, and could not, drastically reorganise it. Our second task is educational work among the peasants. And the economic object of this educational work among the peasants is to organise the latter in co-operative societies. If the whole of the peasantry had been organised in co-operatives, we would by now have been standing with both feet on the soil of socialism. But the organisation of the entire peasantry in co-operative societies presupposes a standard of culture among the peasants (precisely among the peasants as the overwhelming mass) that cannot, in fact, be achieved without a cultural revolution.

Our opponents told us repeatedly that we were rash in undertaking to implant socialism in an insufficiently cultured country. But they were misled by our having started from the opposite end to that prescribed by theory (the theory of pedants of all kinds), because in our country

the political and social revolution preceded the cultural revolution, that very cultural revolution which nevertheless now confronts us.

This cultural revolution would now suffice to make our country a completely socialist country; but it presents immense difficulties of a purely cultural (for we are illiterate) and material character (for to be cultured we must achieve a certain development of the material means of production, must have a certain material base).

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## Better Fewer, But Better

(Excerpt)

The general feature of our present life is the following: we have destroyed capitalist industry and have done our best to raze to the ground the medieval institutions and landed proprietorship, and thus created a small and very small peasantry, which is following the lead of the proletariat because it believes in the results of its revolutionary work. It is not easy for us, however, to keep going until the socialist revolution is victorious in more developed countries merely with the aid of this confidence, because economic necessity, especially under NEP, keeps the productivity of labour of the small and very small peasants at an extremely low level. Moreover, the international situation, too, threw Russia back and, by and large, reduced the labour productivity of the people to a level considerably below pre-war. The West-European capitalist powers, partly deliberately and partly unconsciously, did everything they could to throw us back, to utilise the elements of the Civil War in Russia in order to spread as much ruin in the country as possible. It was precisely this way out of the imperialist war that seemed to have many advantages. They argued somewhat as follows: "If we fail to overthrow the revolutionary system in Russia, we shall, at all events, hinder its progress towards socialism." And from their point of view they could argue in no other way. In the end, their problem

was half-solved. They failed to overthrow the new system created by the revolution, but they did prevent it from at once taking the step forward that would have justified the forecasts of the socialists, that would have enabled the latter to develop the productive forces with enormous speed, to develop all the potentialities which, taken together, would have produced socialism; socialists would thus have proved to all and sundry that socialism contains within itself gigantic forces and that mankind had now entered into a new stage of development of extraordinarily brilliant prospects.

The system of international relationships which has now taken shape is one in which a European state, Germany, is enslaved by the victor countries. Furthermore, owing to their victory, a number of states, the oldest states in the West, are in a position to make some insignificant concessions to their oppressed classes—concessions which, insignificant though they are, nevertheless retard the revolutionary movement in those countries and create some semblance of "class truce".

At the same time, as a result of the last imperialist war, a number of countries of the East, India, China, etc., have been completely jolted out of the rut. Their development has definitely shifted to general European capitalist lines. The general European ferment has begun to affect them, and it is now clear to the whole world that they have been drawn into a process of development that must lead to a crisis in the whole of world capitalism.

Thus, at the present time we are confronted with the question—shall we be able to hold on with our small and very small peasant production, and in our present state of ruin, until the West-European capitalist countries consummate their development towards socialism? But they are consummating it not as we formerly expected. They are not consummating it through the gradual "maturing" of socialism, but through the exploitation of

some countries by others, through the exploitation of the first of the countries vanquished in the imperialist war combined with the exploitation of the whole of the East. On the other hand, precisely as a result of the first imperialist war, the East has been definitely drawn into the revolutionary movement, has been definitely drawn into the general maelstrom of the world revolutionary movement.

What tactics does this situation prescribe for our country? Obviously the following. We must display extreme caution so as to preserve our workers' government and to retain our small and very small peasantry under its leadership and authority. We have the advantage that the whole world is now passing to a movement that must give rise to a world socialist revolution. But we are labouring under the disadvantage that the imperialists have succeeded in splitting the world into two camps; and this split is made more complicated by the fact that it is extremely difficult for Germany, which is really a land of advanced, cultured, capitalist development, to rise to her feet. All the capitalist powers of what is called the West are pecking at her and preventing her from rising. On the other hand, the entire East, with its hundreds of millions of exploited working people, reduced to the last degree of human suffering, has been forced into a position where its physical and material strength cannot possibly be compared with the physical, material and military strength of any of the much smaller West-European states.

Can we save ourselves from the impending conflict with these imperialist countries? May we hope that the internal antagonisms and conflicts between the thriving imperialist countries of the West and the thriving imperialist countries of the East will give us a second respite as they did the first time, when the campaign of the West-European counter-revolution in support of the Russian counter-revolution broke down owing to the antagonisms

in the camp of the counter-revolutionaries of the West and the East, in the camp of the Eastern and Western exploiters, in the camp of Japan and the U.S.A.?

I think the reply to this question should be that the issue depends upon too many factors, and that the outcome of the struggle as a whole can be forecast only because in the long run capitalism itself is educating and training the vast majority of the population of the globe for the struggle.

In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe. And during the past few years it is this majority that has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense, the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured.

But what interests us is not the inevitability of this complete victory of socialism, but the tactics which we, the Russian Communist Party, we, the Russian Soviet Government, should pursue to prevent the West-European counter-revolutionary states from crushing us. To ensure our existence until the next military conflict between the counter-revolutionary imperialist West and the revolutionary and nationalist East, between the most civilised countries of the world and the Orientally backward countries which, however, comprise the majority, this majority must become civilised. We, too, lack enough civilisation to enable us to pass straight on to socialism, although we do have the political requisites for it. We should adopt the following tactics, or pursue the following policy, to save ourselves.

We must strive to build up a state in which the workers retain the leadership of the peasants, in which they retain the confidence of the peasants, and by exercising the

greatest economy remove every trace of extravagance from our social relations.

We must reduce our state apparatus to the utmost degree of economy. We must banish from it all traces of extravagance, of which so much has been left over from tsarist Russia, from its bureaucratic capitalist state machine.

Will not this be a reign of peasant limitations?

No. If we see to it that the working class retains its leadership over the peasantry, we shall be able, by exercising the greatest possible thrift in the economic life of our state, to use every saving we make to develop our large-scale machine industry, to develop electrification, the hydraulic extraction of peat, to complete the Volkhov Power Project, etc.

In this, and in this alone, lies our hope. Only when we have done this shall we, speaking figuratively, be able to change horses, to change from the peasant, muzhik horse of poverty, from the horse of an economy designed for a ruined peasant country, to the horse which the proletariat is seeking and must seek—the horse of large-scale machine industry, of electrification, of the Volkhov Power Station, etc.

March 2, 1923

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March 4, 1923

*Collected Works*,  
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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The article "*The Workers' Party and the Peasantry*" was written in connection with the elaboration of the agrarian programme of the R.S.D.L.P., published in the name of the Editorial Board of *Iskra* and *Zarya* in the summer of 1902 and adopted by the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., in 1903. p. 9

<sup>2</sup> On February 19, 1861, the tsarist government carried out a reform which abolished serfdom in Russia. p. 9

<sup>3</sup> The reference here is to the so-called *otrezki*, or cut-off lands, which were taken away from the peasants and given to the landowners under the Reform of 1861. Those were in the main the best parts of peasants' allotments—meadows, woods, pasture lands, watering places—without which the peasants could not run their farms independently.

The programme of the R.S.D.L.P. adopted at the Second Congress of the Party in 1903 demanded the return of these lands to the peasants. p. 9

<sup>4</sup> A *quarter or beggar's allotment*—a quarter of the peasant allotment established by law for a given district at the time of the Reform of 1861. Some of the peasants received these tiny parcels of land from the landowners without payment of redemption money. Such allotments were, therefore, also called "gift allotments" and the peasants who received them were called "gift peasants". p. 9

<sup>5</sup> *Temporarily-bound peasants*—peasants who were compelled to carry out certain duties (payment of quit-rent or performance of corvée service) for the use of their allotment even after the Reform until they concluded a redemption contract with the landowner. From the moment the redemption contract was con-

cluded, the peasants ceased to be "temporarily-bound" and joined the category of "peasant property-owners". p. 10

<sup>6</sup> *Mediator*—an administrative office instituted by the tsarist government at the time of the implementation of the Peasant Reform of 1861. The mediators, appointed by the government from among the local nobility, were empowered to examine and settle disputes between peasants and landowners that occurred during the implementation of the Reform. Their duty was to fix the boundaries between the landowners' and peasants' lands, to draw up title-deeds, etc. The institution of mediators was representative exclusively of the social estate of the nobility and aided the tsarist government in implementing the plunder of the peasants, in favour of the landowners, by the Reform of 1861. p. 10

<sup>7</sup> The *title-deeds* were documents drawn up on the "emancipation" of the peasants in conformity with the Reform of 1861. They indicated the amount of land used by the peasant before the Reform and the amount of land and woods, pastures, etc., that remained in his hands after "emancipation". The title-deeds also listed the duties the peasants had to perform for the landowners, and served as the basis for calculating the amount of redemption money to be paid by the peasant. p. 10

<sup>8</sup> The tsar's manifesto abolishing serfdom in Russia was drawn up by Metropolitan Filaret, one of the most reactionary of the higher Orthodox clergy. p. 11

<sup>9</sup> *Collective liability*—the compulsory collective responsibility of the peasants of each village commune for the making of timely and full payments and for the fulfilment of all sorts of services to the state and to the landowners (payment of poll-taxes and of redemption instalments, provision of recruits for the army, etc.). This form of bondage, which was retained even after serfdom had been abolished, remained in force until 1906. p. 12

<sup>10</sup> *Quit-rent* was levied on state peasants in the eighteenth century. After the Reform of 1861 state peasants continued to pay quit-rent. By the law of 1887 quit-rent was replaced by land redemption payments but the name "quit-rent" remained and continued to be used. p. 14

<sup>11</sup> *Emancipation of Labour group*—the first Russian Marxist group, formed by G. V. Plekhanov in Geneva in 1883, which did much to disseminate Marxism in Russia. p. 17

<sup>12</sup> The reference is to St. Petersburg and Moscow. p. 19

<sup>13</sup> *Marshals of the Nobility*, in tsarist Russia, were elected at gubernia or uyezd meetings of the nobility. They represented and advocated the interests of the nobility, and occupied influential positions in government. p. 24

<sup>14</sup> *Zemstvo*—the name given to the local self-government bodies formed in the central provinces of tsarist Russia in 1864. They were dominated by the nobility and their powers were limited to purely local economic problems. Their activities were controlled by the Provincial Governors and by the Minister of the Interior, who could rescind any decisions of which the government disapproved. Many of the Zemstvo people, including liberal landowners, bourgeois and intellectuals, took part in the "Zemstvo movement" that was in opposition to the tsarist autocracy. They protested against the "extreme measures" resorted to by the tsarist government, demanded the extension of the Zemstvo powers and made attempts to improve medical services in the countryside, to promote primary education and develop Zemstvo statistics. In 1902, in Stuttgart, the Zemstvo liberals began to publish the magazine *Osvobozhdeniye* (Liberation), which became the rallying centre for such political organisations as the Osvobozhdeniye League and the League of Zemstvo Constitutionalists. These organisations existed until the autumn of 1905 when the Constitutional-Democratic and the Octobrist parties were formed with many of the Zemstvo people joining them. p. 42

<sup>15</sup> In 1889, with a view to consolidating the power of the landowners over the peasants, the tsarist government established the office of *rural superintendent*. Appointed from among the local landed nobility, the rural superintendents had wide administrative and even judicial powers, including the right to arrest peasants and to inflict corporal punishment upon them. p. 59

<sup>16</sup> *Winter hire*—the hiring of peasants for summer work, practised by the landowners and kulaks during the winter, when the peasants were badly in need of cash and compelled to accept shackling terms. p. 92

<sup>17</sup> *Iskra* (The Spark)—the first all-Russia illegal Marxist newspaper; founded by V. I. Lenin in December 1900 abroad, it was secretly transported to Russia.

After the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. the Mensheviks (an opportunist wing in the R.S.D.L.P.) seized the newspaper and

from November 1903, beginning with issue No. 52, it was turned into a Menshevik mouthpiece. It now came to be known as the "new" *Iskra*.

*Zarya* (Dawn)—Russian Social-Democratic theoretical magazine founded by V. I. Lenin. It was published simultaneously with *Iskra* by the editors of the latter. The magazine came out in Stuttgart from April 1901 to August 1902. p. 94

<sup>18</sup> The Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. was held in London from April 25 to May 10, 1905. The Congress was prepared and convened by the Bolsheviks led by Lenin. It adopted highly important decisions on the tactics of the Party in the bourgeois-democratic revolution that had begun in Russia. p. 98

<sup>19</sup> *Uperyod* (Forward)—an illegal Bolshevik weekly directed by V. I. Lenin; published in Geneva from December 22, 1904 (January 4, 1905) to May 5 (18), 1905. Eighteen issues came out. p. 98

<sup>20</sup> "General redistribution" was a widespread slogan among the peasants of tsarist Russia which expressed their demand for the abolition of landed estates and a general redistribution of land. p. 100

<sup>21</sup> New-*Iskra* group—Mensheviks. See Note 17 about "new" *Iskra*. The Menshevik conference took place in Geneva in May 1905. p. 104

<sup>22</sup> On January 9, 1905, by order of Nicholas II, the tsarist troops shot down a peaceful demonstration of St. Petersburg workers who marched with their wives and children to the Winter Palace to present a petition to the tsar describing their intolerable conditions and utter lack of rights. This massacre of unarmed workers started a wave of mass political strikes and demonstrations all over Russia under the slogan, "Down with the autocracy!" The events of January 9 marked the beginning of the 1905-07 Revolution. p. 106

<sup>23</sup> The programme of the R.S.D.L.P. adopted by the Second Congress of the Party in 1903 consisted of two parts: a minimum programme, calling for the overthrow of tsarism, a democratic republic, the eight-hour workday and other demands attainable under capitalism; and a maximum programme, formulating the ultimate goal of the working class, viz., socialist revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat, the building of a socialist society. p. 107

<sup>24</sup> Lenin is referring to the programme issued in 1874 by a London group of Blanquists, former members of the Paris Commune.

*Blanquists*—supporters of a trend in the French socialist movement headed by the outstanding revolutionary and prominent representative of French utopian communism—Louis Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881).

The Blanquists expected "that mankind will be emancipated from wage-slavery, not by the proletarian class struggle, but through a conspiracy hatched by a small minority of intellectuals" (see V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, p. 392).

Substituting the actions of a small group of conspirators for those of a revolutionary party, they took no account of the real situation necessary for a victorious uprising and disregarded the question of ties with the masses. p. 107

<sup>25</sup> *Economism*—an opportunist trend in the Russian Social-Democratic movement in the late 1890s and early 1900s. The Economists held that the political struggle against tsarism should be conducted chiefly by the liberal bourgeoisie, while the workers should confine their struggle to such economic demands as better conditions, higher wages, etc. They rejected the principle of the guiding role of the Party and the importance of revolutionary theory, maintaining that the working-class movement must develop spontaneously. That the views of the Economists were utterly untenable and harmful for the working-class movement was shown by V. I. Lenin in his book *What Is to Be Done?* published in 1902. p. 109

<sup>26</sup> *The Erfurt Programme of the German Social-Democratic Party* was adopted in October 1891 at the Congress in Erfurt. This programme contained opportunist mistakes which were criticised by Frederick Engels in his work *Critique of the Draft Social-Democratic Programme of 1891*. p. 114

<sup>27</sup> See Note 14. p. 116

<sup>28</sup> *Socialist-Revolutionaries* (S.R.s)—a petty-bourgeois party founded in Russia between the end of 1901 and the beginning of 1902. They demanded the abolition of the landed estates and advanced the slogan of "equalitarian land tenure". The Socialist-Revolutionaries resorted to individual terror as a method of combating the tsarist regime. After the defeat of the 1905-07 Revolution, a substantial section of the party and its leadership sided with the bourgeois liberals. Following the bourgeois-democratic revolution of February 1917, the Socialist-Revolutionary leaders joined the bourgeois Provisional Government, sought to suppress the peasant movement and wholeheartedly supported the capitalists and

landowners against the working class, which was then preparing the socialist revolution.

After the victory of the October Socialist Revolution the Socialist-Revolutionaries took an active part in the counter-revolutionary armed struggle waged by the bourgeoisie and the landowners against the Soviet Republic.

p. 117

<sup>29</sup> The reference here is to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 in which tsarist Russia was defeated.

p. 118

<sup>30</sup> *Proletary*—an illegal Bolshevik newspaper, the central organ of the R.S.D.L.P., issued from May to November 1905.

p. 121

<sup>31</sup> The *Peasant Union*—a revolutionary-democratic organisation founded in 1905. Influenced by the Socialist-Revolutionaries and liberals, the Union displayed petty-bourgeois half-heartedness, vacillation, and indecision. While insisting on the abolition of landed estates, it consented to partial compensation to the landowners. From the first days of its activities the Union was persecuted by the police, and early in 1907 ceased to exist.

p. 123

<sup>32</sup> *Black-Hundred* elements—from the monarchist gangs known as the Black Hundreds which the tsarist police organised to fight the revolutionary movement. They assassinated revolutionaries, attacked progressive intellectuals and provoked Jewish pogroms.

p. 124

<sup>33</sup> *Proudhonism*—a pseudo-scientific trend in petty-bourgeois socialism, hostile to Marxism, so called after its ideologist, the French anarchist Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865). Proudhon criticised capitalism but believed that it was possible by means of reforms to "improve" capitalist social relations, to "purge" them of their contradictions, and create an ideal society of small commodity producers in which anarchy would be dominant. In his book *The Poverty of Philosophy* Karl Marx exposed the reactionary and pseudo-scientific character of Proudhon's projects and showed that his main mistake consisted in his failure to understand that poverty, inequality, exploitation of man by man, crises, and unemployment were products of the capitalist system itself and that they could, therefore, be abolished only by doing away with capitalism, by converting the means of production into public property, and by transition to socialism.

p. 132

<sup>34</sup> The reference is to the peasant movement in Poltava and Kharkov gubernias—the first big revolutionary action by Russia's peasants at the beginning of the twentieth century. Its cause was the

extremely difficult condition of the peasants of these gubernias which, in the spring of 1902, became worse on account of the crop failure of 1901 and the subsequent famine.

See pp. 19-97 of the present volume ("To the Rural Poor").

p. 133

<sup>35</sup> *Bernsteinism*—an opportunist trend, hostile to Marxism, in the German and international socialist movement; it was named after Eduard Bernstein, the most outspoken representative of revisionism. The essence of Bernsteinism consisted in its rejection of the basic propositions of Marxist teaching on the socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It was proposed that Social-Democrats give up the revolutionary struggle and work for individual reforms within the framework of capitalist society.

p. 133

<sup>36</sup> *Revolutionnaya Rossiya*—an illegal Socialist-Revolutionary newspaper; published in Russia, from the end of 1900 on, and in Geneva, between January 1902 and December 1905.

p. 135

<sup>37</sup> *V. U. (V. Uorontsov)* and *Nikolai*—on (*Nikolai Danielson*)—*Narodniks*, authors of a number of works on economics.

p. 139

<sup>38</sup> *Maslov* (pseudonym John)—a Menshevik, author of works on the agrarian question.

p. 147

<sup>39</sup> Lenin is referring to the following passage in Marx's article published in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* No. 169, on December 15, 1848: "The whole French terrorism was nothing but a plebeian manner of settling accounts with the enemies of the bourgeoisie, with absolutism, feudalism, and philistinism."

p. 157

<sup>40</sup> *Narodnaya Volya* (People's Will)—a secret terrorist organisation of Russian revolutionary intellectuals, which came into being in 1879 as a result of the split in the *Zemlya i Volya* (Land and Freedom) *Narodnik* society. The *Narodnaya Volya* members made several attempts on the lives of tsarist officials and on March 1, 1881, assassinated Alexander II.

Their programme called for the organisation of "a permanent representative assembly of the people" elected on the basis of universal suffrage, the proclamation of democratic liberties, transfer of the land to the people, and adoption of measures for transferring the factories and mills to the workers. Basing themselves on the erroneous theory of "active" heroes and "passive" crowd, the *Narodnaya Volya* people held that a small group of revolutionaries would be able to seize power and overthrow the autocracy without the support of a revolutionary mass movement.

In the second half of the eighties the Narodnaya Volya was wrecked by the tsarist government. p. 158

<sup>41</sup> In *October, November, and December 1905* the Russian Revolution of 1905-07 reached its highest point.

In October 1905 the workers of Russia, fighting for the overthrow of the autocracy, declared an all-Russia political strike: all the factories and mills of this vast country ceased work, all the railways came to a standstill. On October 17, the tsar was compelled to issue a manifesto which promised to introduce a constitution in Russia and "grant" freedom of speech, assembly, press, etc. The tsar's promises, however, proved a deception and were not fulfilled. In December 1905 an armed uprising started in Moscow. For nine days the city's factory workers fought heroically on the barricades against the tsarist troops equipped with artillery. The tsarist government was able to crush the uprising only by bringing in troops from St. Petersburg. p. 158

<sup>42</sup> The *Constitutional-Democratic Party (Cadets)*—the principal party of the liberal-monarchist bourgeoisie in Russia founded in October 1905. The Cadets did not go beyond the demand for a constitutional monarchy. During the first Russian Revolution of 1905-07, the Cadets called themselves "the party of the people's freedom", while actually betraying the people and secretly negotiating with the tsarist government on ways and means of suppressing the revolution. They were an "opposition" party in the Duma, and as such hoped to share in the government of the country together with the tsar and the feudal landowners. The Cadets submitted to the Duma agrarian reform bills aimed at the preservation of landed proprietorship and the reconciliation of the peasants with the landowners in the latter's interests. p. 159

<sup>43</sup> See Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*. p. 163

<sup>44</sup> *Trepov, D. F.*—Chief of the Moscow Police (1896-1905), Governor-General of St. Petersburg (from January 11, 1905), then Deputy Minister of the Interior; author of the notorious order issued in October 1905: "don't fire blank and don't grudge cartridges". p. 163

<sup>45</sup> *Petrunkovich and Rodichev* were Constitutional-Democrats. p. 163

<sup>46</sup> *Duma*—representative body in Russia (1905-17) set up by the tsarist government with a view to deflecting the people from the revolution. Formally a legislative assembly, the Duma had no effective power.

Elections to it were neither direct, nor equal, nor universal. The electoral rights of the working classes and the non-Russian nationalities inhabiting Russia were greatly curtailed. The vast majority of workers and peasants were denied the right to vote. p. 164

<sup>47</sup> *Trudovik, or Peasant Group, or Trudoviks*—a group of petty-bourgeois democrats in the Duma.

They demanded the abolition of all social-estate and national restrictions, democratisation of the rural and urban local self-government bodies, and universal suffrage in elections to the Duma. Their agrarian programme was based on the Narodnik principle of equalitarian use of land and envisaged the formation of a national land fund with payment of compensation for land taken from private owners.

In the Duma the Trudoviks vacillated between the Cadets and the Social-Democrats, their vacillations being due to the very class nature of the peasants, who are petty proprietors. Since the Trudoviks represented the peasant masses, the tactics of the Bolsheviks in the Duma were to arrive at agreements with them on individual issues with a view to waging a joint struggle against the Cadets and the tsarist autocracy. p. 168

<sup>48</sup> The "*party of order*" was a party of the big conservative bourgeoisie in France founded in 1848. It was a coalition of two monarchist trends among the French bourgeoisie—the Legitimists (followers of the Bourbons) and the Orlanists (followers of the Orleans dynasty). p. 171

<sup>49</sup> Lenin refers to the "Draft of the Fundamental Land Law" introduced into the Duma and signed by 33 deputies (mostly Trudoviks). The "Draft of the 33" was prepared with the direct participation of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and expressed their views on the agrarian question. p. 172

<sup>50</sup> *Polish Kolo (Circle)*—an alliance of Polish deputies in the State Duma. p. 175

<sup>51</sup> Lenin refers to the granting of "free lands" by the U.S. Government, primarily in the West, in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The homestead law of 1862 gave every citizen of the U.S.A. the right to acquire free of charge or at a low price up to 160 acres of land. The homestead laws accelerated the development of capitalism in U.S. agriculture. p. 176



- <sup>52</sup> The *Popular Socialists* were a petty-bourgeois party which split off from the Right wing of the Socialist-Revolutionaries in 1906 and advanced moderate constitutional demands. In the agrarian sphere, they advocated the alienation of landed estates in favour of the peasants with payment of compensation. p. 178
- <sup>53</sup> Lenin refers to the voting of the Trudoviks, Popular Socialists, and Socialist-Revolutionaries for F. A. Golovin, the Constitutional-Democrat candidate for Speaker of the Second Duma. By "tactics of silence" is meant the attitude of the Trudoviks towards the government's declaration read by Stolypin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, in the Duma on March 6 (19), 1907. When the Social-Democratic deputies suggested criticising the government, the Trudoviks announced that they had decided to meet the declaration by "dead silence" and that they had already agreed on this with most of the opposition groups, the Constitutional-Democrats included. When the budget was discussed in the Duma, the Trudoviks voted together with the Constitutional-Democrats to refer it to the Duma budget commission. p. 178
- <sup>54</sup> *Stolypin, P. A.* (1862-1911)—big landowner, Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister of the Interior of Russia, 1906-11. His name is associated with a period of severe political reaction when capital punishment was widely used to suppress the revolutionary movement. Stolypin carried out an agrarian reform enabling the peasants to leave the village communes and to set up separate farms. Under the law of November 9 (22), 1906, the peasants received an opportunity to take possession of their allotments as private property and to withdraw from the communes. They could now sell their land, which they were not allowed to do before. The reform was advantageous to the kulaks and completely ruined the rural poor. p. 181
- <sup>55</sup> *Razuvaev* and *Kolupayev*—capitalist sharks described in Saltykov-Shchedrin's works. p. 181
- <sup>56</sup> Lenin refers to a letter of Frederick Engels to F. A. Sorge dated November 29, 1886, in which he criticises those German Social-Democrats who did not understand the revolutionary Marxist theory and "treat it in a doctrinaire and dogmatic way as something that has got to be learned by heart and which will then satisfy all requirements without more ado. To them it is a credo and not a guide to action". (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Selected Correspondence*, Moscow, 1975, p. 873.) p. 187

- <sup>57</sup> The reference is to the satirical "Hymn of the Contemporary Russian Socialist" published in *Zarya* (April 1901) over the signature of "Nartsis Tuporylov" ("Narcissus Blunt-Snout"). The poem ridiculed the Economists who followed in the wake of the spontaneous mass movement. p. 188
- <sup>58</sup> *Congress of Peasants' Deputies*. Lenin refers here to the conference of representatives of peasants' organisations and Soviets of Peasants' Deputies held in Petrograd April 13-17 (26-30), 1917. The conference was attended by delegates from 27 gubernias, from the army, and from the Peasant Union. It was sponsored by the Popular Socialists, Trudoviks, and the Socialist-Revolutionaries and was devoted to preparations for an All-Russia Congress of Peasants' Deputies. p. 199
- <sup>59</sup> *Dyelo Naroda* (People's Cause)—Socialist-Revolutionary newspaper, published in Petrograd between March 1917 and July 1918. p. 199
- <sup>60</sup> *Shingaryov, A. I.* (1869-1918)—member of the Central Committee of the Constitutional-Democratic Party. Being a minister in the bourgeois Provisional Government, he sent out in April 1917 a telegram forbidding the peasants to "settle the land question independently" and suggesting "voluntary agreement" between the landowners and the peasants instead. Shingaryov's policy was designed to safeguard the interests of the landowners and to prevent the landed estates from passing over to the people. p. 199
- <sup>61</sup> For the Stolypin agrarian reform—see Note 54. p. 204
- <sup>62</sup> *Guchkov, A. I.* (1862-1936)—big capitalist, organiser and leader of the Octobrist Party; War and Navy Minister in the bourgeois Provisional Government.  
*Milyukov, P. N.* (1859-1943)—ideologist of the Russian imperialist bourgeoisie, one of the founders of the Constitutional-Democratic Party; Foreign Minister in the bourgeois Provisional Government. p. 204
- <sup>63</sup> *Izvestia* (News) of the All-Russia Congress of Peasants' Deputies—daily paper published by the All-Russia Congress of Peasants' Deputies in Petrograd between May 9 (22) and December 1917; expressed the views of the Right wing of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. p. 221
- <sup>64</sup> The reference is chiefly to the Stolypin agrarian law of November 9, 1906. See Note 54. p. 223

<sup>65</sup> *Avksentyev and Dan Soviets*, i.e., Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik Soviets. *Avksentyev N. D.*—one of the Socialist-Revolutionary leaders; after the February 1917 bourgeois-democratic revolution was Chairman of the Executive Committee of the All-Russia Soviet of Peasants' Deputies. *Dan F. I.*—one of the Menshevik leaders; after February 1917 was a member of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet; came out in support of the bourgeois Provisional Government. p. 231

<sup>66</sup> *Crown land*—land belonging to the tsar and his family.

*Factory lands*—lands to which serf peasants who worked at the factories were attached until 1861. Following the abolition of serfdom in 1861 those lands remained in the possession of the factory owners. p. 233

<sup>67</sup> Lenin wrote this article in reply to numerous inquiries from peasants' delegates made to the Council of People's Commissars. The "Reply" was published in newspapers and as a separate leaflet entitled "Instruction to Peasants". It was an important document regulating the revolutionary abolition of landed proprietorship. p. 237

<sup>68</sup> *Kornilov, L. G.* (1870-1918)—tsarist general, monarchist. The Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Russian army (from July 1917), he headed a counter-revolutionary revolt in September 1917. Following the suppression of the revolt, Kornilov was arrested and put into prison from which he fled to the Don where he became one of the organisers and then commander of the whiteguard Volunteer Army. He was killed in the battle at Yekaterinodar (now Krasnodar). p. 248

<sup>69</sup> *Poor Peasants' Committees* were instituted by a decree of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee issued on June 11, 1918. The Committees kept a record of food reserves on peasant farms, revealed food surpluses in the hands of the kulaks, and helped Soviet food organisations requisition those surpluses; the Committees were also charged with the duty of supplying food to the poor from the kulak farms and of distributing farm implements and manufactured goods, etc.

Over 80,000 Poor Peasants' Committees had been set up and were functioning by the autumn of 1918. They became the bulwark of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the rural areas and played an important part in the suppression of kulak risings, in undermining the economic power of the kulaks, in completing the abolition of landed proprietorship, and in supplying food to famine-stricken working-class centres and to the Red Army.

By the end of 1918 the Poor Peasants' Committees had fulfilled the duties with which they had been charged, and the Soviets in the countryside had been greatly strengthened with the aid of the Committees and the extensive network of rural Party cells. In view of this, and because of the need to "consummate Soviet construction by establishing a uniform pattern of Soviets throughout the territory of the Soviet Republic", the Extraordinary Sixth All-Russia Congress of Soviets held in November 1918 decided to merge the Poor Peasants' Committees with volost and village Soviets. p. 254

<sup>70</sup> The *law on the socialisation of the land* was enacted on January 18 (31), 1918, at the Third All-Russia Congress of Soviets. It confirmed the abolition of private property in land and transferred it to the Soviet state. A special clause made it incumbent on the Soviet government to promote collective farming with a view to passing over to socialism. To meet the wishes of the peasants, the Bolsheviks agreed to include a clause on equalitarian land tenure though they opposed this slogan of the Socialist-Revolutionaries. "This is not our idea," wrote Lenin, "we do not agree with this slogan, but we think it our duty to enforce it because this is the demand of the overwhelming majority of the peasants. And the idea and demands of the majority of the working people are things that the working people must *discard of their own accord*: such demands cannot be either 'abolished' or 'skipped over'. We Bolsheviks shall *help* the peasants to discard petty-bourgeois slogans, to *pass* from them as quickly and as easily as possible to socialist slogans." (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 28, p. 309, "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky".) p. 254

<sup>71</sup> The reference is to the decision of the Council of People's Commissars of August 6, 1918, "On Fixed Prices for the Grain Harvested in 1918", providing for a threefold increase in grain procurement prices, and the decree "On the Supply of Agriculture with Implements and Metal". p. 254

<sup>72</sup> The reference is to a counter-revolutionary armed revolt of the Czechoslovak Corps, organised by the Entente imperialists with the active participation of the Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries. The Czechoslovak Corps, which consisted of Slovak and Czech prisoners of war, was formed prior to the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution. In the summer of 1918 it numbered over 60,000 men (at the time there were nearly 200,000 Slovak and Czech prisoners of war in Russia). After the estab-

lishment of Soviet power, the Entente powers undertook to finance the Czechoslovak Corps to utilise it in the fight against the Soviet Republic.

The revolt began at the close of May 1918. Acting in close contact with the whiteguards and the kulaks, the Czechoslovak Corps occupied a large part of the Urals, the Volga area and Siberia where they restored bourgeois rule. The majority of the Slovak and Czech prisoners of war sympathised with the Soviets and did not fall for the anti-Soviet propaganda conducted by the reactionary officers of the corps. Many soldiers refused to fight against Soviet Russia and left the corps. Nearly 12,000 Czechs and Slovaks fought in the Red Army. The Czechoslovak revolt was put down at the end of 1919 simultaneously with the defeat of Kolchak's whiteguard armies.

p. 258

<sup>73</sup> *Kerensky notes*—paper money issued in 1917 by the bourgeois Provisional Government headed by Kerensky.

p. 259

<sup>74</sup> *The Brest-Litovsk Peace*—a predatory peace treaty imposed upon the young Soviet Republic in 1918 by imperialist Germany and her allies in World War I. It was signed in Brest-Litovsk on March 3, 1918, and annulled following the November revolution of 1918 in Germany.

p. 266

<sup>75</sup> *Krasnov, P. N.* (1869-1947)—tsarist general who, supported by the British, American, and French interventionists, organised counter-revolutionary action against Soviet power in the South of Russia in 1918-19.

p. 273

<sup>76</sup> *Kolchak, A. U.* (1873-1920)—tsarist admiral, one of the leaders of the Russian counter-revolutionaries in 1918-19. After the October Socialist Revolution, supported by the U.S., British, and French imperialists, Kolchak declared himself the Supreme Ruler of Russia and headed the bourgeois-landowner dictatorship in the Urals, Siberia, and the Far East. In the winter of 1919-20 the Red Army and revolutionary partisans finally defeated Kolchak.

p. 294

<sup>77</sup> See Frederick Engels, *The Peasant Question in France and Germany*.

p. 298

<sup>78</sup> *Bentham, Jeremy* (1748-1832)—English jurist and philosopher, ideologist of bourgeois liberalism and theoretician of utilitarianism. According to Bentham, society consists of individuals united in a common desire for personal advantage. Marx gave an anni-

hilating criticism of Bentham and called him the "genius of bourgeois stupidity".

p. 325

<sup>79</sup> The Second International as revived at the conference of social-chauvinist and centrist parties in Berne in February 1919.

p. 327

<sup>80</sup> *Denikin, A. I.* (1872-1947)—tsarist general; during the Civil War, one of the whiteguard leaders. After General Kornilov's death he became the Commander-in-Chief of the anti-Soviet armed forces in Southern Russia.

*Yudenich, N. N.* (1862-1933)—tsarist general; after the October Socialist Revolution, Commander-in-Chief of the whiteguard North-Western army. Yudenich was actively supported by the Entente imperialists. In 1919 he made two attempts to seize Petrograd.

p. 330

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